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REMINISCENCES

of

GANDHIJI

EIGHT CONTRIBUTORS'  
WITNESS ACCOUNT OF  
THE LIVING GANDHI



BY CHANDRASHANKER SHUKLA

## MEMORIES OF GANDHIJI

This is a sequel to *Incidents of Gandhiji's Life*, and contains the reminiscences of another important cross-section of his friends and co-workers in India and abroad. Here are incidents of his life at its various stages, from his student days in England to the last month of his sojourn on the earth, and ending with 'the last journey' of his earthly remains. The contributors include men and women of various ages and climes, from an Ex-Viceroy and distinguished Westerners to his closest co-workers in India and grandchildren brought up under his care.

Since appreciation and eulogy have been definitely ruled out, the book contains only stones from cover to cover being published here for the first time. The book, it is hoped, will serve as a further supplement to his *Autobiography*, as of historic authenticity which unvarnished eye-witness accounts easily possess. The writers have tried to give as objective an account as possible of what they were privileged to see of the Master's life and work, out of a sense of duty that they owe to the larger world and to posterity.

Hon. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur in her foreword welcomes these "further reminiscences written by those who knew Gandhiji and who will not write anything but what was strictly correct."

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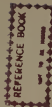
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# REMINISCENCES OF GANDHIJI

by  
FORTY EIGHT CONTRIBUTORS

Edited by  
CHANDRASHANKER SHUKLA

With a Foreword by  
RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR



VORA & CO. PUBLISHERS LTD.

2, ROUND BUILDING, KALBADEVI ROAD, BOMBAY 2

*First Published*  
*March, 1911*

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15580



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TO  
THE REVERED MEMORY  
OF  
SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL

Remember thee, and all thy pains,  
And all thy love to me,  
Yea, while a breath, a pulse remains,  
Will I remember thee.

## FOREWORD

Ever since Gandhiji's voice has been stilled by the mad act of a fanatic many tributes continue to be paid to him and many volumes have already been published and written about him. Naturally all such as have come from the pen of those who had had opportunities of close association with him will carry more weight with readers.

Even during his life-time Shri Chandrashekhar Shukla had collected a series of contributions entitled *Incidents of Gandhiji's Life* and those who have had an opportunity of reading this volume, and particularly those who have never had the privilege of seeing or meeting the great soul but who nevertheless loved him from afar for all that he stood for, will appreciate the fact that the editor is now bringing out a sequel in the form of another collection of 'Reminiscences of Gandhaji'. Gandhiji's own writings will always remain as an immortal epic, and they alone are really sufficient for inspiration and an understanding of his ideals and the way of life which he considered was the path of salvation. But inasmuch as it is always easier for the ordinary human being to understand a person by the way he acts and inasmuch as all of us

treasure all such memories of those who have been near and dear to us, I am glad that Shri Chandrasekhara Shukla is giving to the public some further reminiscences written by those who knew Gandhiji and who will not write anything but what was strictly correct. Many went to him for advice and guidance in times of strain and stress. Many went to learn from him how to live a life of dedication and service. Apart from the advice and guidance and solace that were always forthcoming from this great servant of humanity, those who had the privilege of serving him and living in close association with him can never forget the joy of life which he radiated and what immense pleasure and fun he elicited from the simple round of man's daily life. I am sure *Reminiscences of Gandhiji* will fascinate just as much as *Incidents of Gandhiji's Life* have fascinated readers.

New Delhi,  
23-4-1950

AMRIT KAPOOR

## PREFACE

The present volume, which is a sequel to *Incidents of Gandhi's Life* and has been planned on the same lines, contains a record by another cross-section of his friends and co-workers in India and abroad of what they were privileged to see of his life and work. Appreciation and eulogy have been scrupulously avoided, and care has been taken to make the narration as correct and objective as it could possibly be made. It is hoped that this book will receive the same welcome from the reading public as its forerunner. I take this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude to the contributors, young and old, for their kind collaboration but for which this self-imposed task of mine could not have been fulfilled with any degree of satisfaction. The sad deaths of Shri Gopinath Bardoloi, Mr. S. A. Buelvi, Mr. H. Runham Brown and Shri Konda Venkatappayya, which occurred since their articles were written, only bring home once more the need for collecting betimes the biographical material stored in men's memories if it is not to fall into oblivion for ever.

A friend, at one time close to Gandhiji, has sounded a note of warning. She is of the view that nothing that anyone can attempt to write about Bapu can do him justice. She says: "Any magistrate will tell us the strangely different accounts which are given by perfectly truthful people who were eye-witnesses of, let us say, the same street accident. People do not observe carefully and accurately, except in very rare cases." And yet, as we know full well, this deficiency does not make all first-hand accounts utterly valueless. In fact all human knowledge, gained through the senses and the intellect, suffers from this defect inasmuch as it is always coloured by the medium through which it has to pass and always falls short of Absolute Truth. An awareness of this limitation has not prevented men from writing history

and biography on the strength of whatever evidence was available. Even autobiography labours under the same difficulty; for it is given to no man to have a complete knowledge even of his own self, and therefore we aspire and pray to be able to "know as we are known." An eye-witness has, therefore, to content himself with giving as unvarnished an account as possible of what he has observed.

"All that is happening in our time must be told and re-told," said Goethe. "There have been excellent men in the world and there will be more. It is our duty to write and speak of them. This is the Communion of Saints in which we believe."

The present effort was undertaken with the approval and blessings of the subject of these reminiscences. The book was long in preparation through various causes. I do hope, nevertheless, that the delay will not detract from its value and usefulness. Books will continue to be written on this subject for a long time to come, and will never be too late. For, in Pandit Nehru's memorable words, "the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light." As he put it, "a thousand years later, that light will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it, and it will give solace to innumerable hearts."

Great deeds cannot die;  
They with the sun and moon renew their light  
For ever, blessing those that look on them.

Baroda,  
22-11-1950.

C. B.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

**H. E. MR. ABAS ALI, Esq.-at-law (1889- )**—Member, Congress Working Committee, for several years. Member Central Legislative Assembly, 1932-37 (Member Executive Council), Government of India, 1942-43. First Indian Ambassador to U.S.A., 1947-48. Governor of Orissa since June 1948.

**MR. KAMALNAYAN RAJAI (1912- )**—Elder son of Shri Jaganmal Rajai. Underman, joined Gandhiji's Dandi March in 1930. Joined in 1932 for some time Treasurer of All India States' Congress.

**MR. BAKKISHNA RAJAI (1921- )**—Younger son of Shri Jaganmal Rajai. Underman. Joined Dandi in 1931 and again for 3 years in 1932. Participated in students' movement. As a student, leader and the Parliamentary Delegation that visited India in 1945. Attended International Students' Congress held in Czechoslovakia in 1946 as a member of the Indian Students' Delegation.

**MR. GOPINATH BARKOLLE, M.A., M.L. (1901-1950)**—Suspended legal practice in 1921 in response to the call of the Congress. Member Central Local Board and Municipality, 1924-25. Chairman, Gandhi Municipality, 1931-32. Member, Assam Legislative Assembly, 1937-49. Premier Assam, 1946-48 and 1949-50. Chief Minister Assam since January 26, 1950 up to his death in August, 1950. Joined, 1922-23, 1940-41, 1942-44. Member Indian Constituent Assembly, 1946-50.

**MR. SYED ARIFULLA KHAN, M.A., LL.B. (1910-1948)**—Editor The Dawn, for Chittagong, 1924-1926. Joined, 1928-32, 1932-33. President All India News paper Editors Conference, 1942, 1944-45.

**MR. M. NIRMAL BHOW (1878-1948)**—Patil. Born early collaborator. Joined for two and a half years as a war student during World War I. Secretary and later Chairman, War Resisters International, established after World War I.

**MR. ATULANANDA CHAKRABARTI, B.A.**—Non-cooperated while at M.A. class, 1921. Chief interest communal unity. Won Central Fellowship in India, Madras and Madrasam, of India. Took B. Politics, Not by Politics. Assam.

**MR. P. N. CHANDRANI**—Joined Railway Office. Was with Gandhiji at Delhi during the last few months of Gandhiji's life. Now connected with the Gandhi National Memorial Fund.

**MR. GOPABANDHU CHOWDHURY, M.A. (1922- )**—Gave up Deputy Collector's post and non-cooperated, 1931. Member A.I.C.C., for several years. Joined Dandi March between 1930 and 1931, and again from 1942 to 1948. Has translated some of Gandhiji's books in Bengali.

**MR. MATI RAMA DEVI CHOWHURY (1912- )**—Niece of Shri Madhadas Das of Orissa. Married Shri Gopalchandra Chowdhury, 1934. Took part in freedom movement since 1931. Founded Orissa P.C.C. for some time. Took to constructive work since 1934. Member several constructive work organizations. Joined 1942-43 along with her husband and daughter and son-in-law.

**MR. BISHWANATH DAS, B.A., B.L. (1922- )**—Gave up legal practice, 1930. Member Madras Legislative Council, 1934-35. Member Orissa Legislative Assembly, 1937-42. Former Orissa, 1937-38. Member Constituent Assembly, 1944-48. Member Indian Parliament since January 26, 1950. Joined early days during the freedom movement.

**MR. ANUN CHANDRA DASGUPTA (1911- )**—Son of Shri Bala Chandra Dasgupta. Trained under his father as chemical engineer and constructive worker. Manager, Khadi Production Society (Calcutta). Was with Gandhiji during his prison season in Madras (East Bengal) 1940-47. Works Non-violence, the Servicable Power, Kshatrasam.

**MR. MELVILLE DE MELLOW (1902- )**—All India Radio commentator since 1940. Was given a running A.I.R. commentary on the last journey of Gandhiji as also on several other historic occasions.

**MR. HARATAN MAHADEV DESAI (1904- )**—Son of Shri Mahadev Desai. Engaged in basic education work at Vadodra in the Surat District, Gujarat, since 1945.

**SHRI PRADIP DEBBI (1901-)**—Joined Gandhiji's campaign at Ponnala (South Africa), 1904. Joined upon return during the Rappahanna strike in South Africa which ended in 1914. Editor, District edition of Indian Opinion, published from Pretoria, 1914-17, and 1928-30. Joined theme during the three-day movement in India. Spent over six years in prison in South Africa and India. General Secretary, South African Indian Congress, and General Secretary, Transvaal Indian Congress, 1917-21.

**SHADAB KHANDE KHAN**—Gifted Turkish lady who visited India in 1933. At present engaged in educational work in Istanbul, Turkey. Work India India.

**SHRI SHRI N. V. GADHIL, B.A., LL.B.**—Associated with Congress activities since 1920. Secretary and President Maharashtra P.C.C. for several years. Member A.P.C.C. since 1923. Member Central Assembly, 1934-37. Joined several times during the freedom movement. Minister for Works, Mines and Forest Department of India since August 1947.

**DR. KANTILAL HARILAL GANDHI, M.B.B.S. (1911-)**—Gandhiji's grandson. Brought up at Baburnagar under Gandhiji's care and guidance. Joined Gandhiji's camp March 1930. Joined 1930-31, 1932-33, 1933-34. Worked on Gandhiji's personal staff, 1935-36.

**SHRI KANU HARIDAS GANDHI (1913-)**—Grandson of Gandhiji's cousin. Born Baroda, at Baburnagar Ashram. Joined 1933-34. Worked on Gandhiji's personal staff, 1935-36, and traveled with him during his tours all over India.

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**DR. GORE CHITRAK CHITRAKANT, Ph.D., LL.B. (1913-)**—Member, Indian National Research Commission, 1931-32. Regional Secretary, Maharashtra Council of India, 1932. Spent some time with Gandhiji at Baburnagar, 1933. Secretary to Government, Rural Reconstruction Department, Bombay, 1940-44. Officer in special duty, Information Department, Rajasthan Government, since April 1948.

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DR. G. H. RAJESH (1929).—1.—Born in South Africa. Medical specialist. Former President, Tamil Indian Congress, 1945. Chairman Tamil Proving Khadi since 1946. Imprisoned for six months in a prison 1938-39, 1942. Visited India 1942. Imprisoned for six months in a prison 1943-44, again in 1946. President, South African Indian Congress 1946.

DR. JOHAN OLDFIELD, M.A., D.C.L., M.B., B.S., L.S.M., F.R.S.M.—Works The Priority of Death, Religion and the Concept of Fate, The Mystery of Death, The Mystery of Marriage, East and West, East and West, The Society Aspect of Life.

SHRI A. A. PAUL.—Hon. General Secretary International Fellowship

**MISS AGNES PHILLIPS (1845).** (i)—Went from Britain to South Africa in ship with her uncle, the Rev. Charles Phillips, who was intensely interested in the Afrikaners, which brought them into close contact with Gandhi. She returned to Britain in 1889, was trained as a nurse, and did nursing work during World Wars I and II. She met Gandhi again during his visits to England.

**SRIE KANTIMONCHON SEN—**Principal, Vidyabharati, Santaliganj.

**SRINIMATI SELLIE SENGUPTA—**Wife of the late Sri J. M. Sengupta. Participated in the freedom movement. Member, East Bengal Legislative Assembly.

**SRI CHANDRANANKER SHUKLA (1895).** (i)—Non-cooperated in a college founded in 1928 and then studied at Calcutta, Vidyasarthi, Ahmedabad. Member editorial staff, Young India and Newswatch, 1921-22. Member, teaching staff, Mahatma Ashram, 1924-27 and Gujarat Vidyasarthi Ahmedabad, 1928-32. Gandhian Secretary for one year, 1935-36. Editor, Harijanbandha (Gandhi edition of Harijan), 1944-48. Asst. Editor, Harijan, 1945-49. Editor, Manojda Vaidya Bhawan, 1944. Editor, Hindustan (Gandhi edition), 1948-49. Works: Celebrations of Gandhi, Many Conversations of Gandhi, Incidents of Gandhi's Life (ed.), Reminiscences of Gandhi (ed.), Gandhi As We Knew Him (ed.), Some Famous Interviews with Mahatma Gandhi (ed.), Compiled several collections of Gandhian writings in Gujarati and English. Has written 40 books in Gujarati (many of these translations from English).

**DR. MARGARET SPIEGEL, Ph.D. (Born.) (1907).** (i)—While teaching at Government College, Poona visited India 1932. Discussed by the New Commonwealth for News, 1/1/44, 1932. Became a member of Mahatma Ashram, May 1931. Worked at Sagarwall and Wadhwa for about 2 years. For about one year in Santaliganj. Lecturer in German, Elizabeth College, Bombay for six years. Principal, Mahatma High School, Baroda since 1944.

**SEN DR. JACK C. WINGLOW, M.A.—**Ordained in the Church of England Ministry, 1901. In India, 1914-24. Founder of the Community of Christa Serva Sangha, Poona. As senior Chaplain at Lee Abbey in London. Works: Devotion, Beyond Words, Life of Mahatma Vinaya Takti, The Dawn of Indian Freedom, The Indian Struggle, The Art of Contemplation, etc.

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MY reminiscences of Mahatma Gandhi cover a period of thirty-nine years since an unremembered date, in September 1900, when I had the first occasion to see and hear Mr. Gandhi of South Africa fame, in London. In a quiet corner of Bayswater, London, one Nazimuddin maintained a restaurant of Indian cuisine which catered for Indian students and non-Indian visitors. It was there that a publicly subscribed Dussehra dinner was held to honour and hear Mr. Gandhi. I, like most of the other freshers, was just a callow youth who had barely been able to pick up his bearings. Among the Indian student community there were many budding speakers and would-be leaders of today, by far the most arresting personality of whom was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Around him had been built a flaming ring of violent revolutionarism, and he presided over a galaxy of young revolutionaries of the India House of the late Shyampr Krishna-varma. As far as I can recollect, it was Savarkar's group who had organised the Dussehra dinner, with Mr. B. C. Pal in the chair and Mr. M. K. Gandhi as the chief guest of honour. Like the rest of the gathering of perhaps 150 or so, Mr. Gandhi was attired in the conventional evening dress of the time, with a well-cut swallow-tail coat and a white waistcoat and bow in the Bond Street style of the day. At the end of the dinner Mr. B. C. Pal introduced him in his own oratorical manner and stentorian voice, and the younger generation, almost hypnotised by Mr. Pal's rhetorical eulogies of the hero of South Africa, bent their heads forward to hear the great Mr. Gandhi speak. To the best of my recollection, Gandhi's voice and speech were no different then from what they were afterwards for about forty years—calm, unemotional, simple, and devoid of rhetoric. He spoke for a few minutes, and after thanking Mr. Pal and briefly referring to what had been done in South Africa, in tones of startling modesty he said: "And now, gentlemen, I would not like to stand between you and the speaker of the evening, Mr. Savarkar, any longer," and quickly resumed his seat amid damp and polite applause. Obviously his dispassionate and rather unvarnished type of sedate oratory was not quite the kind of spicy

fare to which the younger generation's palate was accustomed.

I had an occasion to see Gandhiji again by accident, in 1918, at the Delhi railway station. But I saw him at close quarters only when he came to Delhi to attend the War Conference, which was convened in the latter part of 1918 by the Viceroy. Among the others who came was Mrs. Sarojini Naidu whose fame as one of the most eloquent of orators was unsurpassed in those days. At a public meeting held in Delhi, after Mrs. Naidu had cast her spell over the audience in polished periods of Urdu appropriately interlarded with a verse or two from Ghalib, and when all of us felt that it was impossible to surpass her oratory, Gandhiji in his Gujarati pagre and chappkara rose on his bare feet to address the audience. I shall never forget the pin-drop silence during nearly half an hour of his speech which was delivered in glaringly broken Urdu with odd expressions which, coming from anyone else, would have sent the audience into roars of laughter. His language could not be called either Urdu or even the kind of hybrid Hindustani which we frequently hear nowadays. It was a mixture of some typically Gujarati expressions and some very ample Urdu words put together somehow to express his thoughts. But it was the supreme quality of his thoughts and the burning sincerity of his sublime spirit which made so deep an impression on the audience that even those who might have been inclined to be cynical and critical found that half hour packed with rare delicacies of thought and penetrating appeal to what is noble in human nature. He rose in stature in the presence of a critical Delhi audience by many cubits.

In 1918 after the passage of the Rowlett Bills, then known as the Black Bills, which deeply agitated the minds of the leading politicians and the public, Gandhiji suddenly reappeared on the political firmament almost like a meteor and projected his satyagraha movement in Ahmedabad and Bombay, and then came up to Delhi to inaugurate his Satyagraha Committee for launching an all-India campaign against the Rowlett Bills. It was early in 1919, probably in February. His host was Principal Rudra as before, and to his invitation to consider the inauguration of the Satyagraha Committee in Delhi about twenty persons responded including Dr. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Swami Shreaddhanand, Shankar Lal, and some others of the newly established Congress Committee.

and the Home Rule League. I was one of them. At this meeting Gandhiji explained in the most solemn tones the scope of the vow of renouncement which his satyagraha and the duties of a satyagraha demanded. I cannot recall his words, but they appeared to be so grim and forbidding, and the emphasis on total renunciation was so heavily gloom-inspiring, that after he had concluded his remarks there was deathly silence in the room for a moment or two. The first to speak was Swami Shradhdhanand, who said that as a sannyasi he had already abandoned all worldly attachments and had given up all earthly trappings and, although according to his vow he should have nothing to do with politics, this was an occasion which demanded even of sannyasis that they should interrupt their *sawadda* and join the forces of good in their struggle against evil, and he was therefore ready to take the vow in strict accordance with Gandhiji's enunciation. This speech of Swami proved encouraging to the younger ones, and one after another 13 others pledged their word to Gandhiji. Principal Rudra was out of it. Even Dr Ansari and Hakim Ajmal Khan and one or two others, while sincerely admiring the purpose and the manner of the satyagraha struggle, desired to have further time to consider whether consistently with all their public and other commitments they could honestly renounce everything straightaway and become members of the Satyagraha Committee. I myself was one of those who had not the courage to pledge their word to Gandhiji at that moment. But later on I made up my mind to add my name to the 14 others as the first members of the Delhi Satyagraha Committee. A meeting was held in the evening in what was then known in Delhi at the People's Park where Gandhiji opened his campaign as the organiser of the satyagraha movement. It was more or less a repetition of what he had said earlier in the day. A few more members were enrolled at the meeting. Actually the Satyagraha Committee never functioned, but all the work expected of it in the way of organising public demonstrations and general publicity were undertaken by a group of young workers who were common to the Home Rule League and the Congress Committee of Delhi. Soon after that, or perhaps at that very meeting, Gandhiji declared a one-day all-India *hartal* to be observed on the 31st of March. Later on the date of the all-India *hartal* was changed from the 31st of March to the 6th of April, but because Delhi had made elaborate preparations for a com-

plete strike of work in every possible walk of life, which meant a considerable amount of organisation of an unalterable nature, the *hartal* came off in Delhi on the 31st, and, though one of the most peaceful in nature as demanded by Gandhiji, was attended by very serious incidents including the shooting and killing of peaceful demonstrators by the police, in consequence of which the general *hartal* lasted in Delhi for 18 days, with several other incidents which have passed into history. On the 13th of April 1919 the Jallianwalla massacre took place in Amritsar, and martial law was proclaimed in the Punjab. Gandhiji, as the organiser of the *hartal*, naturally wanted to visit the Punjab, and travelled up to Patna, a border town of the Punjab, when orders of internment were served upon him and he was taken back to Bombay under police escort. The cumulative uproar against the various "police and military streetbars" in several places in India during these days, compelled the British Government to appoint a mixed Enquiry Committee presided over by Lord Hunter, which met in Delhi in October 1919. The Congress appointed a Committee to collect and sift the necessary evidence on behalf of the people, to be placed before this Committee, and Shri C. R. Das was appointed to lead the people's evidence before the Hunter Committee. In Delhi I worked for him, and prepared Delhi's case in a long memorandum covering about 30 typewritten foolscap pages. The day before we were to appear before the Hunter Committee Gandhiji, as the Hamlet of the play, came to Delhi, and asked for Delhi's memorandum. I presented it to him. After reading it, he turned to me and asked whether I had realised that the Hunter Committee would have to examine hundreds of memoranda, and could not be expected to find enough time to digest the long tale of woe which I had narrated. He then said: "I want you to reduce this to half a sheet of paper." This was a thunderbolt, and in blank surprise I begged him to consider how I could possibly condense nearly 30 pages of detailed notes into half a sheet of paper. He smiled and said in effect "Let me tell you a story. When Mr. Gokhale interviewed the Secretary of State, Lord Morley, before the Minto-Morley Reforms, he presented him with a long memorandum of about 60 or more pages. Lord Morley, returning it to Gokhale, said: 'Mr. Gokhale, do you realise that we are very busy men and can hardly find the time to read long memoranda? Will you please give me the essence of what you have to say on half a

sheet of paper? Mr. Gokhale took his memorandum back and reduced the contents to half a sheet of paper, which incidentally became the basis of the Minto-Morley Reforms." He added that he had been taught that lesson by Gokhale, and that he would like to teach me the same lesson, and therefore asked me to take back my memorandum. Before doing so he said "You have to produce it tomorrow morning. Can you finish it by this evening?" Rashly enough I said: "Yes." After considerable mental exercise I did succeed in producing the half a sheet of paper he had directed me to, but as I did not have a typist or a typewriter handy, I failed to produce it before Gandhi that evening. I did, however, take good care to take it to him early next morning. He received me with a smile, but reproved me and said "After your failure yesterday I began to wonder whether you were going to let us down. I accept your apology and explanation, but remember you must never make a promise except to keep it." He examined the memorandum and was pleased with it. He then handed it over to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who was there with him, and asked him to examine it. After a close examination, Pandit Malaviya suggested an alteration of just one word somewhere. Gandhi readily accepted it, but I felt rather uneasy because I was not sure of its propriety. Who could, however, argue with towering stalwarts like Gandhi and Pandit Malaviya? While I was taking the memorandum back to be retyped and filed with the Inquiry Committee, I met Charlie Andrews in the passage. I showed him the amendment, and told him that I was not happy about it. He was my old professor, and while mildly upholding my protest, he added: "Since Gandhi has accepted the amendment you should not worry." I had no occasion to see Gandhi again during the sittings of the Hunter Committee in Delhi which lasted three or four days, but a little incident might be recorded here. My leader, Shri C. R. Das, arrived just in time to go straight to the Hunter Committee, and, after having discussed everything with Gandhi, he suddenly said to me: "Now let us go." I protested and said: "Will you not dress for the Committee and let me also put on my morning suit?" He laughed and said: "My suitcases have not arrived and I am going there just as I am, and you shall not steal a march over me. Let us go together as we are." Neither of us had adopted either homespun or even Indian dress until then, although Gandhi's remarkable example was before us.

The progressive tide of nationalism in India had been gathering momentum almost since the outbreak of World War I. The most constructive of the political organisations of the day between 1916 and 1919 was the Home Rule League of Mrs. Besant. Side by side with it the politico-religious indignation of the Indian Muslims over the fate of the Khilafat had been rising like nilotic floods. In 1919 when the War had been won by the Allies it became clear that the Turkish Empire was going to be dismembered, and there was every chance of the Muslim holy places of Arabia falling under the domination of the Allies. This raised the emotional upheaval of the Indian Muslims to the point of volcanic eruption. Meanwhile the Jallianwala outrage had sent a sweeping thrill of horror and anger throughout the length and breadth of India, and the moment seemed most propitious for forming a united front against the British Government. It was about this time that the sporadic squalls of indignation, which had been breaking in disorganised outbursts all over the country, had to be encompassed by a co-ordinating effort. Delhi took the lead under the guidance of Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Amara, and an all-India conference of all the supporters of the Khilafat was summoned in November. Among other measures for co-ordinating all political activities throughout India and forming a lasting bond of unity between Hindus and Muslims, it was felt that the Indian Muslims might register a gesture at this conference and resolve to forego the sacrifice of cows during the Bakr-Id festival. I was deputed to go and ascertain the views of the alumni and the teachers of the Theological College of Deoband, which was known to be an institution of deeply nationalist feelings. I succeeded in my mission, and brought back to my leaders the good news that Deoband was prepared to back such a move. In fact, the younger generation was prepared to go many stages forward and recommend the voluntary abandonment of beef altogether—with only one little condition, that no legal or other pressure should be brought to bear on Indian Muslims to take such a step. They were prepared to respect the susceptibilities of their compatriots and to show neighbourly feeling by foregoing the slaughter of bulls, cows, and calves. Thus was news of the highest significance and therefore, when in my capacity as the General Secretary of the Reception Committee of the first Khilafat Conference, I sat down to draft my invitation to non-Muslims, I included within the

projected scope of the conference the possible consideration of organised "cow protection". I was careful enough to use the most circumspect language for obvious reasons. This invitation was extended, among other great Hindu leaders of India of the day, to Gandhiji. He has referred to this invitation in his *Experiments with Truth*. He accepted it and attended the conference, which proved in a sense fateful as I shall relate later on. I might mention a little incident in this very connection, which has a bearing on Gandhiji's reaction to an omission by a Joint Secretary of the Reception Committee who was in charge of receiving the guests. All of us had to work day and night to organise the show and, on receiving Gandhiji's telegram, I immediately personally directed the staff in charge of reception to make special preparations for his reception. When I arrived at the Delhi railway station I found a phaeton, beautifully decorated with flowers, waiting for Gandhiji. But the Lieutenant in charge of the volunteers came rushing to me and said: "The train from Bombay arrived about two minutes ago, but we did not find Gandhiji on it." I was greatly worried and felt that probably he was coming by the next train, which was due in another few minutes. After we had seen that train and found no trace of Gandhiji, I rushed down to Principal Rastri's house to find out what had happened, and lo and behold, Gandhiji was there! I started making profuse apologies, but I found him rather annoyed. When I said that we were not quite certain whether he was coming by the first or the second train, he turned to me and said: "You must have been staring on your head when you read my telegram, otherwise this confusion could not have arisen." We fully made up for this involuntary omission in the afternoon and carried him to the conference in a procession.

The conference was a very great success but the younger section in its uncontrollable anger was determined to adopt a resolution of "boycott of British goods". Although Gandhiji was not a delegate to the conference, he was being consulted at every step. He opposed the resolution of boycott saying that "it savoured of hatred," and he did not want any violent feelings to be imported into a righteous struggle against any wrong. The elder statesmen of the Muslim community of the day were entirely with him for reasons of prudence. But the younger section, which formed the majority, was determined to carry the resolution. In the course of the debate that

followed Gandhi was requested to address the conference. He made an effective speech and for the first time offered an alternative to the resolution of boycott. None of us had ever heard the word 'non-cooperation' before, which he used on this occasion in offering an alternative to the boycott of British goods. Naturally he was snowed under questions from all sides for the definition of non-cooperation. In explaining the scope of non-cooperation he informed the conference that, while he was entirely opposed to any step of a violent nature, he would recommend that all co-operation should be withdrawn from the British Government as a protest against the wrong which, it was feared, they would inflict on the Islamic world. I have no record of the exact words he used on this occasion, but in effect he said: "The best way to paralyse wrong is to withdraw every conceivable support from it. If the British Raj is in the wrong, you should not serve or support it in any capacity anywhere. You should withdraw from the Defence, Civil and all other Services, and neither use its courts nor its schools and colleges, nor yet any other institution which might support their prestige. It will involve very great hardship and sacrifices, but you should be prepared to make those sacrifices and if you are united in your action, the wrongdoer will be compelled to repent and desist from his action. This is far more comprehensive than the boycott of British goods, and it is based not on hatred but on the assertion of truth in a spirit of complete non-violence. In my terminology it is called satyagraha." The proposition which he put forward seemed very attractive in its scope, and yet somehow it seemed to be so full of undreams of perils that its practicability was in the region of doubt. It was, however, accepted by the Conference, and a resolution briefly drafted by Gandhi himself was passed. Yet side by side with it the younger section managed to pass the resolution of the boycott of British goods also, in spite of Gandhi's passionate opposition. It is an interesting fact of history that this resolution of non-cooperation was repeated by all the Khilafat Committees all over India long before it was accepted by the Congress. It was after the Amritsar Congress of 1919 that all the leaders of the Congress and of the Khilafat movement, including the Ah brothers who had by then been released, repaired to Delhi; and once again at an informal meeting held at Hakim Ajmal Khan's residence the question of non-cooperation was mooted by a combined gathering of Congress and

Khilafat leaders. Lokamanya Tilak was also present at this meeting. Gandhiji was most anxious to secure his approval. Lokamanya Tilak had a public engagement, and wanted to leave the meeting before any decision had been registered. Gandhiji showed him the text of a resolution which was going to be put to the meeting and desired to know whether it had his approval. Lokamanya Tilak, getting up to go, said: "I regret that I won't be here during the discussion because I have a public engagement to keep, but you may take my consent to anything that you may decide for granted, because I am always-prepared to go much further ahead." Saying this he left the meeting.

After the informal meeting had decided that Gandhiji's scheme of non-cooperation should be adopted, the task of working out the details of the scheme of non-cooperation was left to a small sub-committee, which met at Dr. Ansari's house next day. It was this sub-committee which, after considerable discussion, formulated a fourfold scheme of non-cooperation, beginning with the renouncement of titles and honorary posts, going on to the withdrawal of students from schools and colleges, suspension of practice by lawyers, and the withdrawal of all employees from the Services, and, finally, the non-payment of taxes. There is a long history connected with the finalisation of the scheme, but finally it was severally adopted both by the Khilafat Conference and the Congress, and also by the Muslim League, at different times during the year 1920. The 1st of August 1920 was the dead line fixed for the enforcement of the scheme.

Once again in November 1920 this question was brought up at the Provincial Congress Committee of Delhi with Maulana Mahomed Ali in the chair, and Gandhiji as the principal guest of honour and adviser. As the Secretary of the Provincial Committee I had by that time prepared a complete scheme of what might have been considered then a form of semi-parallel government, because I did not like a vacuum left by non-cooperation to remain unfilled. I felt that something must take the place of the British institutions, and that these popular institutions must be organized by the people themselves in the form of panchayats. I called this scheme "Constructive Non-cooperation", and placed it before the Conference. The moment I brought it to the notice of the President, Maulana Mahomed Ali, he shook his head and said to me: "Please show it to Gandhiji. He alone can

advise us whether such a scheme should or should not be adopted." I placed the whole scheme in the hands of Gandhiji. It was far too long (covering nearly 72 octavo printed pages), but I gave him a précis of it. I remember him, right down to this day, looking almost into the far distant vacancy of space and telling me with a pained expression: "This is virtually a scheme of parallel government, and at least I cannot sanction a parallel government at this stage. A great deal of preparation has to be made, and you should concentrate on the preliminary steps, the spinning wheel being the basis." In spite of this advice I felt that the spinning wheel would not provide enough attraction; and as I happened to have some influence with the conference, I succeeded in having a sub-committee appointed to examine and report on the workability of the scheme. Incidentally we did try to work this scheme to a certain extent in Delhi, Muzaffarnagar, Mathura and Meerut with varying degrees of success. I may also mention that full 20 years after this I once again mentioned this scheme to Gandhiji in 1940 when I was a member of the Working Committee, and, at his request, I sent him a copy of it. Later on he told me that he read it from cover to cover and found it most interesting.

Puri,  
15-1-1949

## KHADI CAP AND EARTH POULTICE

*Ramabharan Bajaj*

**I**T was in 1920 that Bapuji came to Wardha for the first time. I was about 5 or 6 then. For the day my elder sister and I had been dressed in silk clothes with gold embroidery. Bapuji had his bath and was having his breakfast when we were taken to him. We bowed to him. After giving us his blessings and a couple of fondling slaps on the cheeks, he smiled and asked us whether we liked our dress better or his. (He then used to wear a dhoti, a shirt and a white cap.) We remained quiet. But when he repeated the question, Kakaji (my father, Shri Ramadai Bajaj) encouraged me to answer him. I told him with a childish pride that I liked my dress better. He took my cap in one hand and placed a white khadi

cap in the other, and told us how the white cap was simple and beautiful. The point that appealed to me most was that it could be washed and could be kept clean. He asked me whether my cap could be washed. I nodded "No." Then he put the question again: "Now will you tell me which is better—the one which can become dirty, or the one which is washable?" I agreed with him that the white cap was better. The next question was that, if it was better, whether I would like to exchange my cap with the one he had in his hand. I knew I was caught. I agreed to the exchange. As I was returning with my sister, Bapuji called us back and asked us to sit down near him. He told us that the cap I had given to him in exchange was such as only the rich could wear. He pointed a finger towards Kakaji, and told us that only Jannakaji could afford a cap like that for his children; that there were many children in the country who could not get such a cap, and that what other children could not get, we ourselves should not wear. Children's clothes, he added, should be simple, beautiful, cheap, and yet washable. He pointed to our dress and said that, though our dress appeared to be bright and colourful, it was in fact not beautiful. He said that the colour hid the dirt and the brightness was only a show.

In December, 1928, on his way to Calcutta for the annual session of the Congress, Bapuji came to Wardha for convalescence and also for a stay at Shri Vinoba's Satyagrahashram, on the site of the present Mahilashram. He was housed on the upper storey of the central building. A temporary bath room was put up on the terrace. He had a quiet rest for a few weeks, and his health improved. With the exception of Mahadev Kaka, Kakaji (my father), Mirabehn, and a few personal attendants, no one was allowed to see Bapuji unless the matter was very urgent. Kakaji himself had taken charge of the gates and no one could go in without his permission. National leaders and other visitors, who came to Wardha, remonstrated and sometimes even got annoyed with Kakaji. But he was very strict, and did not allow anybody even a couple of minutes more than the allotted time. Even after Bapuji completely recovered and resumed his normal work, Kakaji did not relax the strictness about the interviews, and the leaders and visitors affectionately began to call him a 'jailer'.

One fine morning a group of leaders collected near Bapuji's residence expecting him to come out for the

morning walk. Among those who had come were Pandit Jawaharlal, Sardar Patel, Dr. Ambedkar, Shri Shastriji Bunker, Seth Ghanshyamdasji Birla and a few others. It seemed most of them had sought an interview directly, in disregard of the jailor's authority, and everyone had been given an appointment, individually, at the time of the morning walk. Kakaji could not imagine how any interview could be arranged without his knowledge; and the leaders too were very much surprised as to how they were given the same time when every one of them had specifically asked for a separate interview! Everyone thought that his own appointment was the fixed one, and that there was some mistake about the others. Someone said his interview had been fixed through Mahadev Kaka; others said they had got their appointments through Mirabehn or some other member of Bapuji's entourage. Kakaji, on the other hand, said emphatically that none of these had any business to fix up any appointment without consulting him, and that any appointment fixed up in this manner was not valid. While the leaders were joking, grasping, discussing, arguing, and some of them even boasting that whatever happened their own appointments had been fixed, and that they were surely going to have a private talk with Bapuji. Some said they had to leave Wardha that evening or the following morning. Presently the laughter and the heat of the argument both increased. Every one of those present was in a state of eager animation. Then Bapuji descended the steps and loudly said: "I have heard you all. Everybody is right in his own contention. Jinnahji is right in saying that interview cannot be fixed without his consent. At the same time everybody else is also right in saying that his interview has been fixed. Come on, I shall now hear no grievance or complaint." (I have paraphrased his words.) Having said this, he discarded his sandals and began to walk very fast, and told them that only those who could keep pace with him would have the interview that morning. There was practically a race among the leaders to keep pace with him. The sandals which were left by him were immediately picked up by Mirabehn. The road was uneven and strewn with small pebbles. Mirabehn followed Bapuji with a singular devotion, and although tears flowed from her eyes, she was very calm. We children also were running after the leaders. In those days Bapuji used to go for a walk from the Ashram on the Savagran road up to the railway crossing and then return. So

far as I recollect, only Jawaharlalji, Ghanshyamdasji and Mirabehn kept company with Bapuji till the end of the walk. Others tried for a while. For some time they kept actually running. Even Bapuji and Jawaharlalji—why, practically everybody else—ran! But when the others found the distance between Bapuji and themselves considerably increased, they slowed down; and when Bapuji and the advance guard returned, some of these, taking a roundabout turn, jocularly remarked: "Look here, we are actually ahead of you!" By the time they all returned to the Ashram most of them had perspired, and they were all laughing and talking and passing remarks about one another's style of running. Everybody was trying to show as if his own effort was practically the best, taking everything else into consideration. It was a scene we youngsters enjoyed immensely! For us it was a great fun! That morning passed off in joy and laughter. No one had imagined that Bapuji would play such a practical joke with them all. In spite of the fact that additional hours were given that evening for interviews, some leaders and others had to postpone their departure for a day or two.

After the Dandi March Bapuji went and stayed at Karadi on the sea-coast with his batch of salt satyagrahis. I wanted to join them at Sabarmati but could not do so because of high fever. When I joined the party later, I had a temperature of 104°, yet, because of my insistence, he took me into the party. Previously for a year and a half I was on milk and fruit diet. I had malignant malaria, which still persisted. Bapuji asked me to continue my own diet in spite of the rules laid down for members of the party. But I refused to take any special food or treatment. He also advised me not to walk, and said he would arrange for some conveyance for me. But I refused to avail of the concession. In about two weeks my fever was gone, my weight increased, and I felt much better. I had to report to Bapuji every day as to my temperature, diet, activity, etc. By the time we reached Karach my body could not bear the strain any longer, and I was down with high fever. My eyes were severely affected. They became very sticky and swollen. Bapuji made me fast, and earth positions were applied to the eyes. The fever got under control, but the eyes kept going from bad to worse. He became very anxious, and informed my father about my illness. The latter was busy with the salt satyagraha at Vile Parle. He replied

that whatever treatment Bapuji thought best should be given to me; and that, if necessary, he would send somebody to take me to Vile Parle. I declined to go home, for we were under a pledge. Meanwhile Kakasahab, accompanied by an eye-specialist from Ahmedabad, had come to see Bapuji. He got my eyes examined by the doctor, who thought that I had lost my left eye, or at least it was beyond repair, and if proper care was not immediately taken, I might lose the right one also. Bapuji asked me to go with Kakasahab to the Gujarat Vidyapeeth and put myself under the treatment of the eminent doctor I said to Bapuji: "Though I respect the doctor's opinion, I have complete faith in you and your treatment." Bapuji said: "I am ready to experiment on you, but are you ready to lose your eyes? Though the earth poultices have not given any encouraging results as far as the eyes are concerned, your general health has improved, and if you have faith in nature cure, you should continue it even after going to the Gujarat Vidyapeeth, get yourself periodically examined by the doctor, and send me regular reports about your health." I went to the Gujarat Vidyapeeth with Kakasahab. For nearly three weeks I lived on milk and thereafter on a liquid diet of curd and fruit juice, and applied earth poultices to the eyes and the stomach. In nearly six weeks I completely recovered. The eyes were as good as, or perhaps better than, they were ever before, and the malignant malaria, which had persisted for about two years, also left me. It had arrested my growth when I was just 16 or 17. But after my arrival at the Vidyapeeth, during the first month I put on 33 lbs., and in six months I gained 70 lbs. Before that I used to weigh between 80 and 85 lbs. Within six months I went up to 155 to 160 lbs. I have narrated this incident as a personal testimony to the efficacy of nature cure methods, and especially the 'earth treatment' on which Bapuji pinned his faith to such a great extent.

Bombay,  
27-9-1948.

## BOYHOOD MEMORIES

*Ramakrishna Bajaj*

**M**Y parents lived for a time in the Ashram at Sabarmati when I was about five years of age. The only memory I have of these days is that Bapuji walked very fast during his evening strolls, and that we youngsters had practically to run all the time to keep pace with him. It was a coveted privilege to become his 'walking sticks', and we used to long for it, but it was not an easy task because of his speed.

Next I remember of him is when he went to stay at Maganvadi, Wardha, in 1905. My father sent me to Maganvadi to stay with him. He took personal interest in me as he did in everybody else. Every one of us felt the warmth of his affection. In those days I used to collect postal stamps as a hobby. I had never spoken to him about it. But to my agreeable surprise he told me one day that he had preserved two stamps for me for the last eight or ten months! He asked his personal assistant to give them to me. The latter did not remember where they had been kept. Then Bapuji tried to remember it himself. After a few minutes he took out one of the many envelopes in his portfolio, and told me that the stamps must be in that envelope. Oh yes! they were there!

Maganvadi is situated in a garden. I was about eleven at the time I am speaking of. I was allotted the task of climbing up the trees every morning and collecting fruits like rose-apples, jujubes, etc. After collecting them I took them to Bapuji, and he would ask me to distribute them equally among the inmates of the ashram.

At the time of the individual satyagraha in 1941, I was but 17. After the arrest of my father, my young enthusiasm took me to Bapuji to get permission to offer satyagraha. I had little hope of my request being granted, because I was under-age, the requisite age being 18. It seems, however, that he did not want to discourage me. He therefore specially called me three or four times to Sevagram and had long talks with me. I hardly realized that he was testing my capacity to stand the rigours of prison life. It was only after he felt certain about it that he allowed me to court arrest. Indeed he went further, and wrote out the notice I was to send to the Deputy Commissioner, Wardha, of my intention to offer satyagraha. He also wrote out a fairly long statement which I had to

make at my trial in the court. He was busy and tired. It was night-time, and the next day I was to offer satyagraha. He called me, read out the statement he had written for me, explained the meaning of it in detail, and asked me whether I understood it properly and agreed with it. He told me specifically that, if I did not agree with anything that was said in the statement, he would change it. He also insisted on my spending that night, along with my mother, at Sevagram.

The following letter, received by me in prison, would show how particular he was about even the smallest things in life (the original is in Hindustani, and in his own handwriting)

Sevagram,  
23-3-1941.

Dear Ramkrishna

I often read the letters which Mother gets from you. I am writing this letter, because today I was given to understand that I too can write to you. From your letter I see that you have asked for an underwear. I would advise you to do without it. It is not at all necessary in our climate. If, however, its use has become a habit with you, you can certainly have it. Does not our duty lie in deliberately reducing our expenditure to the minimum and to cultivate the highest kind of life? I wish you to try for an all-round development. Love.

Bapu  
(M. K. Gandhi)

Apart from the lesson which he wished to teach me, there is another thing worth noting about the letter. He wrote it only when I informed my mother that I had got permission from the Superintendent, Nagpur Jail, to receive a letter from Bapu. Even then he took care to see that the letter might not be delivered to me without the knowledge that it was from Gandhiji. Therefore, below the signature, he put into brackets "M. K. Gandhi".

He utilized the blank portions at the back of letters he received. There was a small and very ordinary portfolio in which he preserved those papers (pastis as we call them). The portfolio got dirty, and he asked one of the assistants to clean it. The cleaning was not properly done. Bapu never put up with any slovenliness. He explained to the assistant at length like an expert how to

do it—how to wash the cloth with soap, and then put the whole thing under some equally distributed pressure so that the inner cardboard which though wet does not get dishevelled.

I was with him during his tours in Bengal, Assam and South India after his release from the Aga Khan Palace prison. I often felt as if we, the younger members of his entourage, had been sent by God to test his patience and forbearance. Our behaviour at times was bad enough to annoy him, but—forgiving as he was—he would but gently remonstrate with us. Indeed he would spend hours in explaining the smallest things to us. We sometimes felt that it was unpardonable to take so much of his valuable time which could otherwise be utilized for more useful and important work. But what would have been a headache for others seemed to be a pastime with him.

During this tour we stayed for a time at the Khadi Prasthan in Sodepur. It was about 4 o'clock one afternoon, and Bapuji was spinning. Khanshab Abdul Gaffar Khan was sitting by his side. A batch of ten or twelve friends and relatives of mine came in to have *darshan* and blessings of Bapuji. They all came in one by one, made an obeisance to Bapuji, and sat down in front of him. He said nothing at the moment, but called me after the prayer was over and told me that Khanshab was also sitting by his side when my friends came to see him, that it was not right of them to bow to him alone, and that thereafter whenever such occasions arose I should take care to give a hint to the friends to give due respects to others also, and especially to Khanshab when they were with him.

I met him for the last time, in company with some friends, a few months before the fateful 30th of January, 1948, at Bhangi Colony, Delhi, in order to seek his guidance on students' problems. We explained to him our scheme about the formation of the National Union of Students. He said that the scheme was very good but that we should not expect much support for it because people were interested more in exploiting the students politically; that, however, he said, should not deter us from doing the work. "You should keep one thing in mind," he added. "Whether you get any support or not you must never lower the standard of your principles for the sake of accommodating others."

Bombay,  
10-10-1948

## GANDHIJI AND ASSAM

*Gopendra Bardoloi*

**G**ANDHIJI first came to Assam in August, 1921, when the movement of non-cooperation was at its height.

At his reception, the volunteers, who had only been very recently trained, were asked not to touch his feet while he passed by them. I was then the Secretary of the Gauhati District Congress Committee, and naturally I secured a place of precedence in the front line of the volunteers. I cannot describe the thrill and the ecstasy I felt as he marched past me. I did obey the command not to touch his feet, but I remember having touched the ground he trod upon. He was accompanied by Maulana Mahomed Ali and Maulana Asad Sobhani. He stayed with the late Shri Tarunram Phookan, his greatest lieutenant in Assam and one of the foremost leaders of the non-cooperation movement. Gandhiji had not yet taken to the loon cloth; he put on a kurta and a Gandhi cap. He was full of mirth and humour in all his talks and discussions, and he kept all around him in a similar mood. He could go to sleep almost the next moment after he expressed his desire to do so. His food consisted of goat's milk and fruits, fresh and dried, but what impressed me about it was that he could take an average Assam pineapple (weighing not less than 3 lbs.) at a time. I well remember how keen he was on inspecting the implements and products of cottage industry, particularly our hand-spun and handwoven cloth, and how pleased he was to find that the ladies of Assam were all dressed in spotless white and natural colours. He addressed a meeting of about 10,000 people, the largest ever seen in Assam till then, before which a big bonfire of foreign cloth, collected from all over the town, was burning. During this visit he travelled all over Assam and even met the European planters at Dibrugarh.

Being under the domination of the European planters, Assam was the first among the provinces to undergo repression on a very wide scale, and by November almost all the leaders of Assam found themselves behind prison bars, ostensibly for carrying on a vigorous temperance propaganda, on account of which the excise revenue of the Government was brought down by more than half in the course of eight or nine months. I was on the police list, but having been elected a member of the A.L.C.C. in

the meantime, I was told that I and two other friends should go to Ahmedabad, where the annual session of the Congress would be held. We were to meet Gandhiji and apprise him of the situation in Assam and carry back his instructions for the workers. Friends accompanying me elected me as their spokesman, and in the temporary hut erected for Gandhiji on the Congress grounds, I had the opportunity of sitting for long hours with him and seeing him at work. The Congress Working Committee, it might be remembered, made him the sole executive authority of the Congress. It was indeed a marvel to me, then, how any human being could work for twenty hours a day over subjects which shaped the destiny of the country; and this strain, I understood, continued for weeks and months. Although not a member of the Working Committee, I was called to these small meetings sometimes early at 4 o'clock in the morning and had to leave them at 12 o'clock at night, with only just the intervals of meals. Gandhiji had discarded his normal dress in the meanwhile and had taken to the loin cloth. With a handspan and handwoven rug wrapped round him, he was found sitting with his legs folded, his body erect like a sadhu—now discussing momentous issues, such as the release of the Ah Brothers, a compromise with the British Government by withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement, etc., and at other times dictating and correcting notes for the press and so on. To me he gave the message that the purport of the speeches, for which Shri Phookan and others had been arrested and convicted, should be reduced to writing, and workers from a hundred platforms should read them and court imprisonment; that we should not relax picketing before liquor and opium shops, if we had volunteers who could remain non-violent under the greatest provocation. We should in this manner continue to court imprisonment till a single worker was left out. He further impressed on me that if, by our non-violent determination, we happened to provoke the police forces to shoot and kill us, the victory would all the more be ours. I could not convey all this to my fellow-workers as I was arrested as soon as I reached Assam.

The next time I met him was in December 1936, when he attended the Congress session held on the bank of the Brahmaputra at Pandu. His hut was only a few yards from the steep bank, and the December cold wind blew against it. He, like all of us in the camps and out-

sade, was shocked to hear of the assassination of Swami Shuddhanandji, which rendered the whole proceedings of the Congress dismal. To add to this, a biting gale began to blow in all fury, followed by bitter cold showers of rain, which did not permit the proceedings of the Congress to be carried on beyond the second day.

I had the chance of meeting him again at Gauhati in 1934, at the place of Dr. H. K. Das. He had come here to study the conditions of the Harijans in Assam and to raise funds for their uplift. He found somewhat to his satisfaction, that the evil of untouchability did not prevail here to the same extent as it did in other parts of India; but he was pained to see how the city fathers of Gauhati treated their scavengers. He received an address from the Gauhati Municipality, and expressed his desire to inspect the quarters provided for the municipal scavengers. The then Chairman of the Municipal Board sent me to deputize for him. I had to bear the brunt of Gandhi's censure at the time of the inspection, which extended even to the cooking pots of the inmates. Thank God, I was elected the Chairman only a few months later, and almost our first act was to build new quarters for these servants of the Municipality on a better site.

During this visit he also called the workers of Hindustani Prachar—only a few of us—to a private meeting. I spoke to him about our difficulties. Then he gave us a bit of his mind. He said that there was little utility for a Samiti whose purpose would be anything else but to teach Hindustani to non-Hindustani-speaking people. If funds for such a purpose were not available, we should close down the show. As regards teachers, he said that the stage for getting teachers from outside was already over, and that it was time to send Assamese young men to get training in Hindustani elsewhere and utilize their services in the prachar work. I may add here that, after this, we began to send out yearly a small number of teachers from Assam to receive their training in Wardha.

An irony of fate drove me to be a member of the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1938, and I found myself elected as the leader of the Congress Party in the Assam Legislature in 1937, only with 31 members in a house of 168. I had nothing to do with the shaping of the Congress decision, under Gandhi's advice, in favour of acceptance of office. I did not yet know what was his own view regarding coalition ministries, although I knew something about the inner controversy that took place

later on among the members of the Working Committee during the presidency of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose in 1938—the President himself being strongly in favour of such coalitions. I did not feel very happy about a Government which had to rely for its existence on factors other than solid Congress discipline. In the meanwhile, however, the Muslim League Cabinet in Assam resigned on the passing of a no-confidence motion against the Government in September, 1938. The Opposition had either to accept office or allow the Ministry to continue. We informed both the President and Maulana Azad to come and advise us. The former came and asked me immediately to tell the Governor that I would form the Ministry, and I obeyed the President.

After the assumption of office, we were there only for 13 months before we were directed to resign on the war issue. A number of leaders from Sylhet urged the Working Committee and Gandhiji against such a step. But we followed the lead given by the Working Committee and resigned in November, 1939. Within a year came the individual satyagraha. This time almost the entire body of members from Sylhet as also the other members of the Coalition Party other than Congress members of Assam agreed that the Assembly members should not be directed to join satyagraha as in Sind, and be allowed to fight the Muslim League Ministry who continued opening up the grazing reserves of Assam and allowing the Muslim immigrants from East Bengal to perpetrate all manner of atrocities on the local people, particularly the innocent tribal people of the plains. A deputation—consisting of the late Shri A. K. Chanda and Shri Baidyanath Mukherjee to represent the view that we should continue to function in the legislature, and myself to represent the viewpoint of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee that we should join the satyagraha—went to Wardha, and met Gandhiji in October, 1940. I of course pointed out the evils of a Muslim League Government in Assam and the necessity of resisting it whenever we were in the legislature, but I added that as the issue of satyagraha was an all-India one, the Assam Provincial Congress Committee and the Congress members of the Assembly had decided to join it. Shri Baidyanath Mukherjee used all his arguments against satyagraha in Assam. What surprised me most was that the author of the satyagraha expressed himself personally against our joining the movement. He, however, ultimately said that the final

decision rested with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the President, and that since he was coming to Wardha next day, we should first meet him and explain to him the position and then we could meet Gandhiji again with the President at 3 p.m. the next day. I explained to Maulana Sahab our point of view, and so did our friends from the Sarma Valley. In the afternoon we met Gandhiji and the Maulana together. The danger of an unopposed Muslim League Government in Assam was again stressed with great emphasis; but the Maulana told Gandhiji that an exception against satyagraha was already made in the case of Sind, and that, if another province was to be exempted, the object of an all-India action would indeed be frustrated. He sympathized with the difficulties of Assam, and repeated that the British Power would soon have to bend, when the first thing he would do would be to take up the case of Assam. Gandhiji fixed his gaze on me just for two seconds, but I had already given my opinion to the Maulana in the morning. In a second or two he said: "You have to follow the President of the Congress," and we did follow him. I have narrated this incident at such length because of a subsequent reference by him to this decision. Seven years later I happened to consult him on another matter which I shall refer to later on—when he told me that I must have the strength to fight any wrong against anybody, even if it were the Working Committee of the Congress. He said it was a mistake on my part to have yielded on the issue mentioned above. I was surprised to find how he could store up such details in his mind for seven long years.

In December 1940 I was imprisoned for a year for offering satyagraha along with a number of co-workers, but our life this time was made very much easier by the jail authorities. Apparently Gandhiji took interest in all the satyagraha prisoners and became, as it were, a sort of monitor to us. He imposed on us duties which the jailor did not, for, in January 1941, Shri Mahadev Desai wanted me to write to Bapuji to tell him how we were passing our time in jail and I wrote to him more than once to tell him that some of us were working at the rate of 14 to 15 hours a day with 4 to 5 hours given to spinning. I wrote to him how some of us who had been indifferent spinners became adepts in a short time. Not knowing that he had explained in his *Anandalekha* Page (translation of the Gita with a commentary) I wrote to him for his opinion in the matter. By way of reply he sent me a copy of the

Hindustani translation of *Anisakti Yoge* through Shri Mahadev Desai.

In the jail I contemplated on Gandhiji's tenet about the equality of religions, and I felt that I should try to bring it home to the youthful minds by writing in Assamese a series on the lives of avatars and prophets like Rama, Buddha, Christ and Mahomed. I sought Gandhiji's permission to write also his life, not only to explain how he interpreted the equality of religions, but also to prove that his method of action was like that of the prophets of old. He wrote to me in reply: "You will offend all orthodoxy by bracketing me with the avatars and prophets, and I think rightly. You cannot write of a living man in the same way as of the dead, who by common consent have been acclaimed as Great Teachers." It was only when I again explained to him the object of writing the book that I got the permission. To my deep regret this self-appointed task is still unfinished.

I was released from jail prematurely, on account of my illness, in June, 1941. All my comrades in the Assam Assembly had not yet come out of jail, when I sought Gandhiji's permission to attend the Assembly. He readily gave it. Before the session was over in December, 1941, Sir Saadullah's Ministry resigned on account of their prominent Hindu Minister Shri Rohini Kumar Choudhury's resignation, and the Governor had to take the responsibility of the government of the Province under section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935. Just then Japan joined the War, and soon dashed towards us. I suggested to Gandhiji that satyagraha in Assam should be immediately suspended, and that we should organise a peace brigade for a drive in self-sufficiency and for maintaining a non-violent morale of the people. It was probably in March 1942 that the Working Committee of the Congress adopted a resolution to the same effect, but, under Gandhiji's advice, we had already in Assam an enrolment of many hundreds of recruits for this peace brigade. When hundreds of refugees, who had already begun their trek to India through the mountains and valleys of Eastern India leaving many of them dead on the way, the Shanti Sena of Assam was well organised to give succour and relief to their unfortunate compatriots.

When I saw Gandhiji in April of that year, never did I find a person more bitter against the British rule, and I could see that some momentous measure was already shaping itself in his mind. He wrote to me in June, when

he distinctly said that I was to feel and act like a man in the fullest state of independence, and that all Congressmen should feel and act likewise. I met him again on the morning of the fateful 'Quit India' resolution at Birla House in Bombay. I could not fully inform him about things in Assam for want of time.

He was released from the Agakhan Palace in May, 1944. I had been released in January, 1944, also on grounds of ill-health, but was yet an internee. The change from the world that I had left in 1942 to the one to which I was brought out in 1944, was so great that I felt sorely disconsolate. This part of the country had become a big theatre of war. Innumerable military convoys and special trains passed through the villages and towns of Assam causing innumerable accidents and many deaths. Numberless wounded and dying persons were being brought by special trains from Manipur and Burma fronts to the steamers, many to find rest from their agonies on the wide breast of the Brahmaputra. Exaggerated tales of debauchery, rape and murder by the soldiers were being given undue currency, and the morale of the people in some places was worsened by the forcible requisition and occupation of lands and houses of the villagers. Amongst the people of the province itself, the population of which increased by several lakhs, sordid and base instincts appeared to be the ruling motive in not a few, and moral courage and man's capacity to fight evils appeared to me to be a thing of the past. In this mental anguish, I approached Gandhiji for advice. I wrote long letters and sent a few of them through my young friend, Shri Mahendra Mohan Chaudhary, who had also come out of jail a short while ago. Gandhiji himself was very anxious to hear about the situation in Assam.

In one of the letters he wrote in reply to the query of some of our underground workers sent through me as to whether the women of Assam could use knives and daggers to save their honour, his unequivocal reply was that they could and they should.

In the meantime, the Muslim League Ministry, which was installed in August, 1942, caused the worst harm to the people of the land and the graners in particular, by filling almost all the vacant places with Muslim immigrants. The demand from a large section of the people of Assam was that if the Congress party members were to enjoy their holiday in jail, they had better resign their seats in the legislature, leaving others to fight out the

menace. I thought they were right, and that no evils should be allowed to go unchallenged. Gandhiji was approached for advice, and he asked us to go to the Assembly and fight against whatever we considered to be wrong.

In December, 1945, he decided to go to Bengal. I thought I would seek this opportunity to bring him to Assam also, and when he agreed to come, the joy of the people knew no bounds. He had written to me that he could serve Assam best by remaining at one place just as he was doing for Bengal from the Khadi Pratishthan at Sodepur. We therefore decided that he should stay at Gauhati. We made a small bamboo hut of mat and thatch on the land of Dr. H. K. Dasa, at Sarana on the outskirts of the town. On his way to Gauhati in January, 1946, Gandhiji visited the silk weaving demonstration at Sualkuchi on the sands of the Brahmaputra. Here a crowd of ten thousand men and women sang *Ramdhun* along with members of Gandhiji's own party.

While here, he had his daily morning walk, and the rustics—boys and girls, Muslims and tribal people—would wait by the side of the village path to see him pass. He met and addressed all the Congress workers from different parts of Assam. He spoke to them on their responsibilities in connection with constructive work. He settled a controversy about Hindi and Hindustani which was exercising the minds of the Congressmen and others interested in the subject. He told me that, if I believed in the truth about Hindustani, I should try to follow it even if I were in a minority of one. Every afternoon, before sunset, we had prayers with *Ramdhun* in the town where an assemblage of 20 to 25 thousand clapped with the refrain, and heard in rapt silence the after-prayer speeches.

But a great surprise awaited me one evening when I found that he was taking lessons in Assamese spelling from two or three little children of 8 or 9 in a corner of his hut. He had also written something in the Assamese script. He saw me as soon as I entered the hut, and a sweet smile beamed on his face. That same afternoon, in reply to a question whether Hindustani would not be an additional burden on students, he said that it was not difficult to acquire a passable knowledge of many languages. I was told that he was learning Bengali at Sodepur in the same way.

When the time for him to leave Assam arrived it was decided to have a thirty hours' trip by a steamer up to Dhubri, from where he would take a train. We chartered a steamer, but he would not like to board it; he suggested to me that he and his party should be allowed to pay the fares for this trip. It was only after some persuasion by Satishbabu and myself that he agreed to come. We had prayers on board the steamer which was quite spacious, and we all were so near him. We had a most glorious sunset one evening. The entire western sky was all crimson, and in the midst of it the radiant orb, itself a red ball, was sinking on the wide breast of the Brahmaputra. He came out of the cabin, and stood for about two minutes witnessing the glory of the scene. I am sure he vastly enjoyed it. Then he turned to me and said he had seen such sunsets on the sea only. On the way we stopped only at Goalpara, and the same night at 10 p.m. he left Assam never to come back again.

The Cabinet Mission came and gave us Grouping of the Provinces as part of their Plan, and Assam was to join Group C. I heard the announcement as it was communicated through the radio on the night of 16th May, while I was on my way to attend a conference at Delhi. I got extremely worried and could not sleep the whole night, visualising the likely evils of the arrangement. Shri Baidyanath Mukherjee, a Minister of our Cabinet, accompanied me, and our first task immediately on arrival at Delhi was to knock at the gate of every member of the Working Committee—all of whom, excepting the President of the Congress, seemed to accept the arrangement. It took me long to apprise them of the difficult circumstances of the province and its multifarious problems. I pointed out the grave injustice to a province with 9 votes being subjected to another province with 8 times as many votes to determine her future. But the reply that I generally received was that we should have nothing to fear as we could go out of the Grouping, if it was found that Assam was being subjected to wrongs in the Sections. I will not try to repeat what discussions I had with the leaders and how distracted I felt in those days over this question. In this state of mind I went to Gandhiji and placed my views before him. I told him that the future that I was contemplating, for the people of Assam in discharge of my responsibilities, would be rendered thoroughly impossible if Grouping was accepted. (Shri Baidyanath Mukherjee was present with me all the time

and he told me afterwards that, from the manner in which I presented my case before him, Gandhiji was justified in chastising me in the manner he did.) Gandhiji queried, was I not the Prime Minister of a province, and was it in that way that I would discharge the responsibilities of my high office? There was no reason to be impatient or to lose one's balance. He repeated that I was the Prime Minister of a province, and that nobody could force anything on my province against my wishes. I then told him about the reaction of the members of the Working Committee; but he told me that the Working Committee could never force anything on an unwilling province to its detriment. Therefore, if I thought that it was a grave wrong to my province, I should fight it out and not yield to anybody. He told me that the Working Committee would never be unreasonable, but I should have to fight it out with them also, if they adopted an attitude not consistent with the best interests of the province. I only asked for his blessings which, I felt, he gave with all his heart. I came out of his camp in the Bhangi Colony in New Delhi, not only relieved of much of my anxiety, but a braver man also. Indeed it was on account of the infusion of this spirit that I felt myself equal to fighting out this evil, against the machinations of the Muslim League in my province, in the party deliberations of the members of the Constituent Assembly or elsewhere. In the mentality created by the statement of 16th May, 1946, on minds endowed with legalistic lore and static and stereotyped temperaments, my attitude was interpreted as opposed to the best interests of India. In the Constituent Assembly and in the Working Committee, I soon found that the forces were thickening towards acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan, and I was being thrown to the ugly alternative of either accepting the plan and bringing ruin to my province or of breaking away from the Constituent Assembly and the Congress, to bear whose allegiance had been a pleasure and a duty to me all these twenty-five years. I spent many a prayerful hour to seek light, and the conclusion at last which I reached was that Gandhiji and Gandhiji alone could save Assam.

He was then carrying on his broad shoulders but in weak health, the burden of our great sin of communalism in the Muslim-ravaged villages of Nookhal and was distributing the life-giving nectar of love and peace in place of the destructive poison of hatred and strife. I decided to send two friends of ours, Mahendra Mohan Choudhury

and Shri Bapu Bhagti with a letter from me asking for his directions. I do not want to quote anything from the letter; it was only a plaintive appeal for direction to me. But immediately came the reply, in the same strain as in his last conversation, viz. that I should stand firm and not yield. He reiterated that nobody could help me if I yielded, but that if I refused to agree, nobody could force anything on an unwilling people. The letter was published soon after this. I did not know how it was done; but it had a tremendous effect, and my attitude was fully vindicated.

A week or two later, I myself travelled to his place—a village six miles from Kazirkul where Satishbabu was staying in the midst of ruins created by the evil spirit in man. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Acharya Kripalani, the Congress President, had also gone there the same day. Thakkar Bapu was lying ill in a corner of the house where I met Gandhiji. He expressed genuine pleasure at seeing me, and said that he had already said what he had to say in the matter, and that I should not have taken the trouble to go over there. Then by the way he asked me how it was that the letter was published in the Press, and—laughing all the time—said in *Hindustan*: "Not that I would not publish a letter which I wrote in private; but there were certain unpleasant references which might as well have not been published. I said I did not know who did so, and added that, looking to the press message, it appeared to have gone from Chaurasana. Just then Panditji appeared with certain drafts—I do not know if they were not connected with the subject of Grouping itself. I explained to him that I had gone to "convince" Bapu's support, and after a peal of laughter from Bapu, I left the place. Coming and going back I walked about 9 miles that day. I remember that, on that day also, I was accompanied by Shri Raddyanath Mukherjee. I remember the fatigue I felt. But both while going and coming back, I was thinking all the way what an ocean of love-force Gandhiji must have in him to make him walk nearly that distance almost every day.

Sometime in 1947 I met Gandhiji again. The division of India had been agreed upon, and referendums in Sylhet and the N.W.F.P. were also over in favour of the Muslim League. Murder, arson, loot and rape—each community trying to outdo the other in the two Punjab—had begun on a scale never dreamt of. The Boundary Commission had not yet finished its work. Judges ap-

pointed by India and Pakistan both for the Punjab and Bengal including Sylhet could not agree, and the British Chairman had to do the final work. On the Assam side Eastern Pakistan claimed the inclusion of Cachar, Goalpara and what not. The judges were hearing the cases, and the air was thick with all sorts of rumours. While at Delhi I found that some Khasi gentlemen and ladies having a leaning to the Muslim League went there to meet Lord Mountbatten and Mr Jinnah. Serious misgivings arose in my mind as to what the offshoot of this Commission would be. I spoke to Panditji about it, and he asked me to meet Lord Mountbatten and tell him the facts I mentioned to him. So I went and told Lord Mountbatten that by no interpretation of the terms of reference of the Boundary Commission could Cachar and Goalpara come under the purview of the Boundary Commission, and I requested him to make that clear to the Commission. He agreed with my interpretation, but said that, since the whole matter was left to arbitration, and the whole enquiry was in the nature of a judicial proceeding, it would not be proper for him to give a clear direction, but he added that the terms were so obvious that they could not include the two districts. Then he asked me whether I knew of any place of higher altitude in Sylhet. I said a large part of Sylhet was below sea level and I knew of no place which was higher than 2 to 4 hundred feet. Then he took me near a map and pointed out Shillong and the lower slopes of Khasi Hills. He asked me if these areas were in Pakistan. I said that Shillong was the capital of Assam and that these areas were in Khasi and Jaintia Hills which were parts of Assam. I came back without any more thought on the subject of this enquiry then. In the meantime, the Khasi friends had interviewed Mr Laquet Ali and other leaders of Pakistan. Next day it suddenly occurred to me if Lord Mountbatten's enquiry was not in any way connected with these moves and interviews. In my suspicion I argued within myself if Lord Mountbatten might not also think in the same way as the Khasi representatives. To whom should I go in this hour of doubt, misgiving and confusion, but to one who had always removed them with his loving sympathy? It was sometime towards the end of July or the beginning of August, 1947, and Gandhiji was sitting in his usual seat with only Rajkamari Amrit Kaur in the room. I shared with him my fears and troubles. But before I finished he said "I have heard

all about your attitude regarding the separation of Sylhet. Why did you agree to the referendum?" I told him that I was no party to it. Immediately came the retort: "Can anything happen in a province without its Prime Minister becoming a party to it?" I then told him all I knew, how Lord Mountbatten, at a lunch to which I was invited, said that he presumed I was indifferent about Sylhet going to Pakistan. I told him, however, that while it was true that a large number of the people in the Assam Valley wanted Sylhet to be separated, and at one time even the Hindus of Sylhet had the same wish, Congressmen of both the places wanted to live together, as they fought a common fight for about thirty years. I told him also how Lord Mountbatten met the leader of Sylhet, the then Home Minister in our Cabinet, Shri Basanta Kumar Das, the same evening at a garden party, and how the latter agreed to the referendum, and how the Working Committee of the Congress endorsed it. I then put to him: "How can I fight the Working Committee?" He answered rather firmly: "Did I not tell you that you should be prepared to fight any wrong? Why did you not do so? Seven years ago you made a mistake in adopting satyagraha and in trying to follow the Working Committee." Then referring to the subject under discussion he said: "I can do little for you; you may better go to the Sardar." I said: "I shall surely go to him; but, Bapu you must do something." He said as if he was thinking aloud: "Once you agree to an evil, you do not know where it will lead you." I sat mute for 8 to 10 minutes while he was talking to himself and partially to Rajkumaris. I read in his face a bitterness and a despair which, during the course of 25 years' experience, I had never seen before. He spoke in a very low tone: "I am a man not given to suspicion much less do I act on suspicion. But looking at things around me, I feel suspicious of even the best actions of the Britisher." Then he became silent. I once more repeated: "Bapu, will you not do anything for me?" He said again: "Go to the Sardar." I obeyed him and went to the Sardar the next morning. I expressed to him my doubts and fears in the same way as I had done to Bapur; but he said that I was wrong in my suspicions, and that, if I felt so strongly, I should have spoken to him earlier. I came back with the impression that he considered my fears to be groundless.

And verily they were! The next evening Sardarji gave a party at the Imperial Hotel to the Rulers of the

States and their representatives in the Constituent Assembly, to which he invited Lord Mountbatten and all his colleagues in the Cabinet, the Premiers of Provinces and many others. I had only been 3 or 4 minutes in the room when Pandaji started without any introduction of the subject. "You see, Bardoloi, there was a clear misunderstanding . . ." But by the time I began to understand him, an Aide-de-Camp of the Viceroy was already at my side to tell me that His Excellency would like to talk to me. I went with him immediately and was about to take a seat near by; but Lord Mountbatten made me sit by his side on the settee he was occupying. He said: "On the day I met you, I could not explain to you certain things which were yet confidential, but I can speak to you now. You see, Sir — was offered the Governorship of East Bengal. He has three little children (he mentioned their ages) and his wife. He, therefore, wanted to know from me if there was any cooler place of higher altitude in East Bengal where he could keep his wife and children. He had just left my room when you came in, and who could give better information about East Bengal and Sylhet than you? I, therefore, wanted to know from you all about these places. And you possibly thought that I was thinking of ceding these areas to East Bengal, and then you spoke to Gandhiji!" With that he gave a big pinch to my arm. "As you know now, nothing could be farther from my thoughts. I shall write to Gandhiji, but go and tell him all that I have told you." (I have paraphrased his words.) All that I could say was that I was extremely sorry and ashamed. I told him that I am never given to suspicions; but in the extraordinary times and circumstances in which we were living, I had been subjected to unfounded doubts and fears. I told him how grateful I was for the frank manner in which he explained the matter to me. I could not meet Gandhiji; but I wrote to him a letter giving him a report of my talk with Lord Mountbatten.

It was in the course of some of my visits during this period that I perceived the inner agony from which he was suffering on account of the division of India and the crimes that followed it. In one of those moments he uttered: "Who wants me now?" I felt a sort of a dart in my heart, and came out with tears in my eyes.

People like us thought that, since independence had come, we would all settle down to the construction of a new province. But it appeared to my great sorrow that

forces of disruption took possession of the minds of some people more than they had possibly done ever before. Selfishness of the worst type seemed to take possession of men, from which even some Congressmen did not seem to escape. In this province the aftermath of the transfer of Sylhet and the attendant evils of the transfer of poor clerks rendered the political situation bitter, and not a few letters were received by me threatening my murder by an unknown hand. I felt perplexed as to what would be the best way to fight these evils—whether by remaining in office or by going out of it, and I wrote a lengthy letter to Bapuji. After a long interval he wrote back to say that while the conclusion arrived at by me was quite correct (my desire to resign), he would not hazard any advice, as it would amount to a blind man leading the blind, and he asked me to approach Kakasaheb for advice. But what he wrote to me in the end of the letter is of importance. He said: "Set apart some time every morning and pray."

The last time that I saw him was during his fast at Barla House for the pacification of the communal feelings that were creating a wave of crimes in Delhi itself. It was 2 o'clock when I arrived at Barla House and directly went to the yard where Gandhiji was lying on a cot in the sun. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was discussing with him the conditions under which he would be prepared to break his fast. I went and caught hold of his feet for a few seconds and kept standing near his legs for about ten minutes while the conversation was going on. He only smiled at me. I had a full opportunity of studying his face and the pose in which he lay on the cot. He was speaking in low but distinct tones with the usual emphasis. He had the Burma hat given to him by Thakin Nu on his head, and his whole face was aglow with a radiance that I had not seen in him for several months. He was protected from the western sun by Dr. Sushila Nayyar and some other ladies. But nobody could miss the beaming happiness that was radiating from his face. Every moment of the talk, however, made me anxious about his condition—it was the seventh day of his fast, and I decided not to speak anything, although I came with a determination to ask him to break the fast. Immediately after the Maulana had finished, he beckoned me to his side, with a smile which will linger in my memory for the rest of my life. I took one step towards him, and told him that I had nothing to say, and with a *namaste*

left his side to the place where the Maulana was talking with Dr. Nayyar and others. I did not listen to the conversation; but all the time I was contemplating on Bapu's fast and the duty it imposed on us.

Little did I imagine then that it was the last time that I would have the chance of meeting him. Today I feel an agony in my heart when I remember that I did not go near him even when he beckoned me, although I did so from the tenderest of feelings in me.

Shillong,  
14-10-1948

## TWO LITTLE TALKS

*Syed Abdallah Brelvi*

I HAVE had the privilege of having had intimate talks with Gandhiji on many occasions. I shall refer only to two interviews with him, because they bring into relief the paramount importance he attached to non-violence. The first is the interview I had with him in the Agakhan Palace, where as a prisoner he had embarked on his 21-day fast. When I asked for permission to see him during the early days of the fast, I had hoped that I would be able to ask him some questions; but when I did see him, his condition had become grave and the duration of the interview was reduced to three minutes. From those who had already seen him I had gathered that Gandhiji was passing through unprecedented mental agony. It distressed him beyond words that, of all persons, Lord Linlithgow should have so far misunderstood him as to believe that he, who had dedicated his life to non-violence and who valued non-violence more than life itself, could ever countenance or condone violence of any kind. It hurt him deeply that, though grave charges were made by Government against him and the Congress, no opportunity had been given to them to refute those charges. This agony, as well as the effect of the fast, was writ large on his face. He responded to my salutation with his characteristic smile. When I sat beside him, he asked me, in a whisper, if I had anything to tell him. I replied that I had come only to pay my respects to him and had nothing to tell him, adding that I had already learnt from

friends who had seen him what he had told them. He closed his eyes and, though for half a minute he remained silent, I could sense that he was making a great effort to speak. Then he began speaking in whispers and, as he spoke, his voice grew more and more audible. "Yes," he said, "but I had not completed what I wanted to say." He added that he could never approve of violence, but he did not wish to criticise or condemn those who were reported to have resorted to it, until he had studied all facts. If he had not been arrested, he said, he would have carried on negotiations with the Viceroy for a settlement and, if he had been compelled to start a mass movement, he would never have permitted violence of any kind. His intention was, if the movement had been started, to raise it to the highest pitch of non-violence yet reached in history. Then, referring to the Hindu-Muslim problem, he said, in a most earnest and touching tone, that before his arrest the question was nearest to his heart, and that he had determined to do all he could to have it settled, and had decided to go to Mr. Jinnah even if the latter did not give him an appointment.

The second interview was the last one I had with him. It took place in Birla House, New Delhi, exactly a week before his assassination. He had, only a few days before this interview, ended his last memorable and successful fast on behalf of Muslims. Excommunications had been showered on him from all parts of the world. After some minutes' talk with him, on various subjects, I referred to the tributes that were being paid to him by the leading men in Europe and America, and suggested that, now that India was free, he should go to Europe and America where they were in need of his message of non-violence. He agreed with me and said that he would soon like to go to those countries but that immediately his place was in Pakistan where he would go on a mission of peace, if the Qaid-e-Azam gave him the necessary permission.

Bombay,  
13-11-1948

## GANDHIJI AND PACIFISM

H. RASHAM BROWN.

**T**WENTYFIVE years ago I received my first letter from Mahatma Gandhi. For the next ten years a few letters were exchanged, all with reference to the theory of pacifism and the War Resisters' International in particular. I formed the opinion that Gandhiji felt that he had taken upon himself so great a job in championing India's independence and by leading that struggle for freedom by the new and novel method of non-violent non-cooperation, that the rest of the world must take care of itself so far as he was concerned. No doubt he believed that the example of success in India by non-violent means would do more to help the world towards a new way of life than by his trying to lead a world-wide movement in which India could only play a minor part.

It was not until Gandhiji came to England in the summer of 1931 to attend the Round Table Conference that I had the privilege of meeting him. I was invited to a luncheon given in his honour; a rather incongruous way, I thought, to honour a man with such frugal habits as the Mahatma. When I was introduced I hardly expected him to remember even my name, but he turned with a smile remarking: "Oh yes I know the War Resisters' International."

A few days later we had a private meeting. I sat in an arm-chair on one side of the fireplace, whilst his secretary, Mr. Datta, sat opposite. Gandhiji sat at our feet on the hearth-rug spinning. Conversation was largely between Mr. Datta and myself. Gandhiji appeared for some time to be hardly interested and went steadily on with his spinning. I began to feel that perhaps I was boring him and had better retreat, when suddenly without stopping his wheel for a moment he looked up and took over the conversation which made it clear that he had been following every word and was taking my measure.

I was sorry for my fellow-countrymen at that time. I am afraid that the majority of Britons saw only a strange old man dressed in a loin cloth with a white blanket wrapped round his shoulders. All the cartoonists drew foolish pictures of him; and the Press, without understanding, gave him a poor show. A lesser man would have been thoroughly discouraged by that visit to Great Britain. As it was Mahatma Gandhi went back to

India knowing that he had a long road and a hard road before him. He wrote now and again, and I remember a sentence in one letter in particular: "If but one man could live the highest type of love, it would be sufficient to neutralise the hate of millions."

It was a great honour to have the co-operation of Gandhiji and his friendship. In 1928 he sent Dr. Rajendraprasad to represent him at the War Resisters' International Conference in Austria, and in 1934 Miss Shide was his deputy at our Conference. Dr. Rajendraprasad was a true disciple of Gandhi. I remember after the Conference making the four hours' journey by train from Vienna to Graz where we were both to address a large meeting. We separated at the station, and later in the evening when I entered the hall with some friends everything was pandemonium. The Nazis had taken possession of the place, driven our friends from the platform, and were breaking the furniture. I stood for a short while in the midst of the mad crowd wondering whether they would turn on me next, when Dr. Rajendraprasad entered from another door. He looked round, took in the position in a moment, and without hesitation walked quietly on to the platform and took a seat. Almost immediately he was knocked over the head and fell to the floor, and his friends carried him out. That was the end of our meeting. Yet that quiet act without fear, resulting as it appeared in complete failure, made perhaps a greater impression on the people of Graz than our meeting would have done. It was just Gandhiji over again doing what he had set out to do, never turning back until the job was done.

Gandhiji was unlike other saints. He was a practical statesman of the world. Ideals in the clouds never appealed to him. He must make them work, and he did. I had the great privilege of receiving and passing on a long correspondence between Gandhiji and Vladimir Tchertkoff, Leo Tolstoy's great Secretary, and Russia's greatest pacifist and anarchist, there being no direct post between Russia and India. I was invited to read that correspondence and I did. Tchertkoff was telling Gandhiji that he was not really a pacifist at all. I think the mistaken idea of the Russian was not so much due to the fact that Gandhiji had come more slowly to his pacifist convictions than the great anarchist had, but because of certain things that the Mahatma had said or written. He had declared that it was better to fight even with carnal weapons than to cravenly submit to injustice. Sayings

like this were quite incomprehensible to Vladimir Tchertkoff. To him pacifism was a great religious faith—nothing could shift him. It seemed to me that the Mahatma never placed his faith in any fixed creed or dogma. All his life he was experimenting with Truth, searching for it, and he often said that he had stumbled on the way. But to him theories were experiments in the search to find that true way of life, and if any man found it—Mahatma Gandhi did.

Enfield,

18-19-1948

## HIS WAY TO UNITY

*Atalendra Chakrabarti*

**I**T was in the winter of 1934 that I first came into contact with Gandhiji. He was at Patna in connection with the Bihar earthquake relief. I had just brought out my first book on cultural fellowship. I met him by appointment and tried falteringly to introduce myself. He listened to me while concluding his meal with his wooden spoon. I was encouraged to present him a copy of my book. As he started glancing through it I held my breath in suspense. He looked up at me with a bright kindness and said: "You seem to be a great Sanskrit scholar!" I said I was only an industrious student. He went on turning the pages, and observed: "A book of this kind may well have its own merit, but as an endeavour at unity a book, however well written, makes but little contribution. Unity is bound to come, but it will come only through concrete service." My heart sank at this opinion, coming soon after an indulgent beginning. I began groping for a reply. He viewed me with sympathy, and repeated that what he was giving was not a literary estimate. His concern was how far it would help the cause of unity. He feared that books would serve little useful purpose.

I sought leave to explain, if there was time. I was told I could. I pleaded at length. Gandhiji heard me patiently. When I finished, he said: "I have heard you. I do not see anything in your story to change my view. What is wanted is service and not books. I like much of what you have been trying to do in the villages."

His advice was lost. I kept on living in libraries. There was little inclination to return to my work on the village front. In the summer of 1937 I wrote to Gandhiji a rather long letter, explaining my project of an organized effort at unity through cultural fellowship. A post-card from Shri Mahadev Dasa was the reply. I took it as denial of the recognition I should have had. My vanity shot up. I hurried at Gandhiji a still longer letter demanding a reply from himself. This time I got his own letter and a long one, meeting my points one by one. He pulled down all my arguments for a cultural organization to combat communism. He urged me, instead, to put in my individual effort. In his view it was only a few individuals who in history were known to have been able to remove deep-seated and wide-spread moral ills, organizations were good for nothing for that purpose.

But I did not give up my project. Again I argued, this time supporting my letter with a cutting of my article published recently in *The Bombay Chronicle*. Here is his reply quoted in full.

Dear Anulananda,

I have your letter. I am glad your daughter is wholly out of danger. May she be found better still when this reaches you.

I have very carefully gone through your article "Not by politics alone." I still cannot visualize the "League", much less its ramifications. Your article drives me to what I suggested before. It involves itself—and quite properly—into spreading your message through your book, other writings and through your speeches. The sale of your book would be simply a bye-product and may incidentally give you some-thing money. You seem to be a man with a mission. The "League" of your imagination may come into being later when people recognize your mission. If you form a "League" now, you are in for a disaster. You will be overworked in hundreds of work and feel cramped and would want to take your way through the meshes of your own creation.

You can see from what I am telling you that there is no lack of interest in you on my part. Only I cannot yet see eye to eye with you. It may be that there is something which I have not yet understood. If such is the case, you will continue to strive with me until you make me see the thing as you see it. I know I am, at times, very dense. You will have to be patient with me. I am going to unearth your book that you gave me, and if I succeed, I shall try to read it. Before I merely glanced through the pages.

Sagun—Wardha,  
28-8-37

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. GANDHI

The project of the league was now set aside, and I presently applied myself as completely as I could to the writing of another book. When it was ready in typescript, I went to Wardha for a foreword to it from Gandhiji.

He asked to be spared. I insisted. He asked me to leave the copy with him and see him again after a week. When I returned, he said to me "I have hurriedly gone through the book. On the whole I like it. I am an old believer in unity. Why, then, should you seek a foreword from me? Get it from a Muslim." I felt disappointed; but his logic was irresistible. "Will Maulana Azad do?" I asked. "No, no. The Maulana is with us. Go to a big Muslim of the opposite camp. A foreword from such a one will convince your readers. It will convince yourself too, for it will prove that you have power to convert people to your view." I then mentioned the name of Sir Shafast Ahmed. "Very good, indeed," he said. "His foreword should give you academic recognition." And, softly smiling, he added "You will have physical protection too, if he is behind your book." I did not follow the remark and the smile, and I looked up to him inquiringly. He said: "Presumably you have not seen Sir Shafast. He is a strong man. You will be physically safe if he is on your side. Once I was at work on translating some excellent Islamic materials. When it was known, some Muslims approached me and wanted me to stop doing it. I pleaded that they were fine pieces, while many Hindus did not know them, and even many Muslims, perhaps. It would do good to us all to know the good things of one another. I was told point-blank that they might be good, but that as a Hindu I had no right to reproduce them. In the end I destroyed what I had written in this connection." After a pause, he went on "You see the depth of our mutual dislike. On such occasions one may well lose all hope. I have lived with many Muslims, and they have lived with me. For instance, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan had put up here, and I got near his mind. It was so with my great Muslim friends. But I have failed to touch the mind of my Muslim countrymen at large. It is a grave failure, and it gives me no rest." This was the gist of what he said. Then, with something like a jerk, he got back to the reference. "So Sir Shafast's foreword would disarm those who may have any such objection to your book."

The book was published in March 1940 with the title: *Hindus and Muslims of India*. Gandhiji gave an article

to it in *Harizon*, May 4, 1940, under the caption, 'Hindu Muslim Tangle'.

Madhapur,  
13-10-1948.

## THE LAST MONTH

*P. B. Chandwani*

**I**N 1924, on his premature release from prison, Gandhiji wrote a striking article in *Young India* under the caption, "Hindu-Muslim tension—its cause and cure". I still remember how its perusal electrified me and how at the end of it I wrote to him that in my own humble way I shared his "first and final" creed of truth and ahimsa in their deeper connotation of right and love. In actual life, however, as an erring mortal I often strayed from the straight and narrow path and would therefore love to spend a few months under his protecting wings. Promptly came a post-card in his own writing, saying that I should have to span eight hours a day. I felt indignant and thought he was a faddist. Was Truth his creed, or spinning? Did not Truth reveal itself in diverse forms? Why must all be moulded into a common pattern? So when a few months later he came to Delhi, I went to him carrying these questions in the pocket of my mind. It was a winter evening, and there he sat, cross-legged as was his wont, eating his scanty meal. The way he sat and ate was enough for me, and I was conquered by one look from his gentle eyes, one loving word from his mouth. "Bapu," I said, "how glad I am to see you look none the worse for your imprisonment and operation." "Yes, and I am even better than I look," insisted Bapu, bearing his chest to reinforce his point.

In August 1931 he came to Simla for a series of interviews with the Viceroy. Daily he walked from Fir Grove to the Viceregal Lodge, and it was a pure delight to many of us including some of the highest officials of the Railway Board, European and Indian, to stand in the gallery opposite the Secretariat Post Office and observe with an admiring gaze his erect pose and majestic gait. I can never forget the tense atmosphere followed by wild shouts of joy and enthusiasm outside Fir Grove, when it was

announced after long and anxious deliberation that Gandhi had decided to leave for London within half an hour to attend the Round Table Conference as the sole representative of the Congress. A large multitude had gathered in drenching rain, and women, some with babes in their arms, burst forth into songs of patriotic fervour with full-throated melody. Stealthily I sneaked into his room and silently sat in a corner by his side. The whole place was charged with bustle and excitement, Gandhi alone sat tranquil and poised, quietly writing for his weekly, as if nothing had happened! "Such is the likeness of the Yogi's mind, sheltered from sense-storms and burning bright to Heaven!"\*

It was my great good fortune to spend the last month of his earthly sojourn with him. On the New Year Day, at the end of an argument in which we could not fully convince each other of the facts of a case, he said that his greatest safety lay in his readiness to correct himself when he found his error. He had long given up consistency which, he reminded me, was, in the words of Emerson, "the hobgoblin of little minds", and was ever consistent to truth as he saw it from moment to moment.

On January 2, Bapu dictated a reply to a letter received from a European friend, in which he said that the disturbances in India were due not to the failure of ahimsa, but to his own imperfections as an exponent of ahimsa and to the passive resistance of the weak which had released a vast amount of unwholesome energy.

On January 3, we sat down to a joint examination of an English translation of his speech of June 1947 before the A.I.C.C. Less than a month before that speech, walking with Bapu in the Bhangi Colony, I had ventured to suggest that political division on the basis of religion was apt to degrade both politics and religion, and this observation had elicited from him an energetic "of course". A couple of days later, Bapu, in one of his most powerful speeches, had said that Jinnah Sahib spoke of Pakistan, but that we would refuse to yield an inch of ground to force or coercion. I recalled it and blurted out: "Bapu, beside that speech, this one of June seems a pale performance. For once you were evidently speaking with a divided mind." He listened patiently, and admitted that he was labouring under severe limitations due to his belief that the country could not, and in its own interests should

\* *The Ring of Truth, Break the South*

not change its leadership at that juncture. Moreover, he said, it was meet for the Congress to honour the pledge of its trusted executive.

On January 6, Shrimati Khurshedbehn, granddaughter of Dadabhai Naoroji, told Bapu that the disturbances had robbed her of all joy, and that she was just drifting along and doing her duty for duty's sake. Bapu replied that joy lay in the doing of one's duty regardless of the outer conditions.

On January 8, he gave many interesting interviews—one of them to a very large deputation of refugees from Bahawalpur. The Nawab of Bahawalpur had assured him, he said, of his sympathy with Hindus and his anxiety for their return. But the leader of the deputation was sceptical of the Nawab's sincerity. Speaking in measured accents, Bapu observed: "I am not in a position to question his sincerity. Nor can I at the moment advise you to return. When the time comes for me to offer such advice, I shall go with you myself." The deputation also complained that they were not being registered for employment by the Transfer Bureau in Delhi as they came from a state and not from a province. Bapu felt that this was a distinction without a difference, and promised to make an enquiry. He asked the spokesman not to spare him but to keep coming until he was able to give a final reply. The men and women were greatly touched, and the leading figures apologised for having staged a somewhat angry demonstration at the outset. With soothing words Bapu pacified them, saying: "Brothers, there is no need for an apology. You have suffered so grievously. If I had been one of you, who knows, I might have behaved likewise? I belong to you, and the only difference is that here I have good food to eat and a decent mansion to live in, while you lack the bare necessities of life. I would forego these amenities if that could but help you."

On January 12, when he broke his silence after the announcement of his fast, he told me, as he was pacing to and fro in his room, that he had received an invitation to the wedding of a friend's daughter, and wondered how even a patriot of such calibre should have his girl married at this saddest hour of our history when India seemed to be losing her soul. We did not realise this, he said, or if we did, we did so only superficially.

On January 13, just before the commencement of the fast, a number of friends had assembled in Birla House,

and Gandhaji, coming out of the bathroom, greeted all with a smile. There were a few Muslim ladies also, one of whom with tears in her eyes implored him to give Delhi a further chance before embarking on his fast. Gandhaji said that he could eat and rest and walk and laugh, but how could that give peace to his heart when he saw no peace in the country? He would break his fast when there was no disturbance in Delhi at least, whatever happened elsewhere.

A couple of days after the termination of the fast Bapu called me to his side, and at the end of a long conversation of a personal nature asked me why I was sorting telegrams the previous night, a task not assigned by him to me. I said that I could not approach him for work from a sense of delicate regard for his health and so had taken over work from Pyarelalji. Bapu said: "Why this sense of delicacy? I am a bhangi. Show me the regard you show to a bhangi—or if you do not like me to put it that way, show to others also, even to a bhangi, the regard you have for me. Then can you be said to have a sense of delicacy."

"Bapu," I once said, "I see both within and without an eternal conflict between forces of good and evil. If God is both all-loving and all-powerful, why does He tolerate unjust misery? He is either one or the other, but cannot be both. I feel the Divine Mother is all-loving and, maybe, the most powerful—but not all-powerful!" Bapu replied: "Even this limited belief is enough for you if you will but act on its corollary. For it follows that in the choice between good and evil which confronts us in our daily life our duty is simply to throw the whole weight of our will and being on the side of God and ask no other questions."

"If God has finished the use of this body none can save me. If, on the other hand, He still wants to use it, nothing and no one can kill me." This is what he affirmed both during the fast and after when he was warned of a conspiracy against his life. And in this simple and unshakable faith he greeted Death with "*He Rāho, He Rām*" on his lips.

Ah!

New Delhi,  
30-9-1948.

## THE GLACIER MELTS!

*Gopabandhu Choudhury*

**G**ANDHIJI loved Orissa. He often said that Orissa was his dearest province. The skeletons in Orissa used to haunt him in his waking hours.

In 1928, at the end of the satyagraha in Bardoli, he delivered a speech wherein he poured out his heart. Even at this moment of jubilation he could not forget Orissa. Orissa, he said, was the acid test for him. Addressing the national workers and peasants of Gujarat, he reminded them that the vow they had taken to win Swaraj could not be said to have been fulfilled so long as the famished were not fed and the naked were not clothed. He cited the example of Orissa and said: "If I describe the conditions in that province, tears will begin to flow from your eyes and also from mine."

But who knew that it was reserved for an Orissa worker to witness these tears—the flow of the melting glacier? It was in December 1928. I had gone to Wardha to bring down Bapa to the Sambalpur district in Orissa. In order to fulfil a promise given long ago he had planned to visit the district on his way to Calcutta where he was going for the annual session of the Congress. On this occasion I had the good fortune to spend a few quiet hours with him.

One day I asked him what his expectations were in respect of the work and the workers in Orissa. He told me how since his return to India Orissa had attracted his attention. He had heard of the chronic famine conditions in the province, and he remembered how Shri Thakkar Bapa was organising relief work there. He said how he had met Govind Babu of Orissa who used to tell him of Orissa and her distress. He went on to describe how he came in contact with that jewel of Orissa, the late Pandit Gopabandhu Das, and recounted how he had seen these moving skeletons at Puri in 1921.

The voice gradually lowered, and the outpourings became almost like musings. When he came to the description of the scene at Puri, the voice was choked, and the hands that were plying the charkha slowed down. Then came these words: "I realised then that the service of Orissa meant for me the real service of India." With these words the hands stopped, there was a lump in the

throat, and a suppressed sob—a tear rolled down that seemed like a melting of the snows. Complete silence prevailed for a few minutes. After he recovered, he proceeded to make suggestions about the spread of the charkha in the province, and spoke at some length of the single-minded devotion required of the workers, closing with a saying of the Gita:

व्यसनापाविता बुद्धिरैव दुष्कृतम् ।

(In this, o joy of the Kurus, the recalcitrant understanding is single.)

In May 1934 he undertook a 'walking pilgrimage' in Orissa as part of the Harijan tour. Here are a few interesting incidents relating to that pilgrimage.

On the second day the morning halt was at Sakhu-gopal where we put up at the Seva Sadan. Bapu was having a shave at the hands of a village barber. A new aluminium water pot attracted his attention. At once he sent for me, and asked me to inquire when and by whom the pot had been purchased. He had particularly banned special expenses for entertaining him and his party. He was satisfied only when he was told that the pot was Ashram property, and a gift from a donor.

In an evening halt at Chandampur, after the usual prayer and meeting, Bapu came out to see where he had to rest for the night. Nights were, as a rule, spent in the open, and days under mango groves. The local people had selected an open piece of ground near a tank. There was another spot, a little higher up, near a keora hedge. Bapu selected this spot, and ordered his bedding to be made just a few yards away from the bushes. It was the hot season when snakes moved about in the night. The local workers, therefore, pointed to the danger. Even before they could have their full say, Bapu laughed and retorted: "If a snake comes down there in the open and bites me?" And he calmly insisted on his bed being put up at the spot he had selected.

About ten days later, at the morning halt at Bahakudi, a lady barber came to shave Bapu. She was bedecked with clumsy silver ornaments such as are used by villagers. She interested Bapu, and he spoke to her about ornaments, trying to get some of these from her for the Harijan cause. There was a trace of sadness in her voice as she spoke out the truth: "Maharaj, how could I come without ornaments on such an auspicious occasion as

serving you? I have borrowed these from my neighbours." Bapu of course missed the ornaments for the Haryana fund, but the lady, after serving a large number of customers eager to have a shave by the Gandhi barberess, earned a good sum of five rupees or so, and placed the whole amount at Bapu's feet.

Bari-Cuttack  
25-9-1948

## SACRED MEMORIES

*Rama Devi Chowdhary*

**I**T was May 1944. On the last day of the foot march Bapu was walking down to Bhadrak railway station. He suddenly sent for me. Most of his discussions with workers took place during the morning and evening walks. He spoke to me about the training of women workers, and advised me to take up the training of young girls for national service. "You have got the capacity. Start an institution. There are so many institutions for women in other provinces. But they lack the proper objective. Whatever the intellectual attainments of the girls, their conduct and their thoughts may be, a spirit of service will attract them to your institution. Other institutions are paying undue attention to increasing the intellectual knowledge of the girls. But you should give more importance to the moulding of their thought and character."

During the pilgrimage, one day I ventured to massage Bapu's tired limbs during the evening halt. He was resting. After some time he looked up to me and said, "Oh, is that you?" The massaging seemed new to me. I at once imagined it to be Onya massaging. It is quite good." Thus encouraged, I, along with my daughter Annapurna, gave him a massage whenever opportunity offered itself during the march, and also on other occasions at Sevagram and elsewhere.

In 1948 we, mother and daughter, paid a visit to Sevagram, and once asked his permission for giving him a massage. He wrote on a piece of paper, it being his day of silence: "In Ba's memory I have given up the massage.

Something had to be given up. Still if you will feel happy in giving me a massage, you may do so." But in view of the sacred resolve mentioned in the note, we thought it proper to forego the privilege.

At the Hudh session of the Gandhi Seva Sangh Conference in April 1937, we, Oriya workers, decided to invite the next session to Utkal. It fell to me to sound Bapu before the formal invitation was given. I was diffident, lest he might have serious doubts about the capacity of the Oriya workers, unaccustomed as they were to manage such all-India conferences. When I spoke to him he became serious for a few seconds, and then his face beamed with joy. He said: "The number of workers in Orissa is limited. Again, it is difficult to raise funds there. Can you shoulder the responsibility? I want to change the rules hereafter. Hitherto the Central Board paid the travelling expenses of workers attending the conference. But now the province inviting the conference will have to pay these expenses. Of course most of these workers will raise the amounts of their expenses from their own localities. Yet you will have to bear the expenses of a few of them. Can you bear the burden? I love Orissa most. If you can do this, I shall be really glad." He then went on to make a few suggestions. "All the food served there must come from local products, and nothing should be imported into the area by motor or rail. You have a year's time. Start making the arrangements immediately on your return. Try to grow vegetables and procure cows' milk. If wheat will not grow there, give us rice chapatis. Pay first attention to sanitation. We often ignore it in the haste for feeding guests. You have seen that the earth used in the latrines here is sandy, and unfit for such use. Good earth contains some oxids which is necessary for cleaning hands. Moreover sand spoils the manure. Sanitation is the central thing in such conferences. If it is bad, everything is bad."

The next conference met at Delang in Utkal in 1938. Bapu was there for a week. A good goat had been procured to provide milk for him. Suddenly she fell ill. The Government vet was sent for. Two women workers regularly looked after her. 'Bulletins' about her condition were conveyed to Bapu every two or three hours. Still he sent out his to see the goat off and on. Not satisfied with all this he said to me: "Since I have drunk her milk, and she was brought here specially for my sake, I have a great responsibility. I am unable to go and see her. But

you should see to it that she is properly looked after." The goat recovered. Bapu made inquiries about her health even at the time of his departure from the place.

Bari-Cuttack,  
26-9-1948

## WHEN THE CONGRESS TOOK OFFICE

*Biswanath Das*

IN 1937 the Congress contested the Provincial Assembly elections under the new constitution of 1935, and got large majorities in six provinces of India. The burning topic of the day was whether the Congress would undertake responsibility and assume office under a constitution which it had so much opposed. A convention met at Delhi, and it resolved to undertake responsibility of provincial administration provided certain assurances were given. These assurances were then demanded by the leader of every provincial Congress Assembly Party, and were refused by every provincial Governor. A deadlock ensued. Three and a half months later, a statement was made by the British Government in the House of Commons. This was followed by another statement made by Lord Linlithgow, the then Governor-General of India, in his message to the people of India in July 1937. A meeting of the Working Committee was convened soon after to discuss whether these statements could be taken as assurances by the Congress. The leaders of the Assembly parties were also invited to attend. Bapu came with a draft resolution which became the starting point in the discussions. In the Working Committee there were two clear trends of thought visible. Pandit Nehru and Subhas-babu were not in favour of accepting these statements as assurances. Sardar Patel and Rajendrababu did not express themselves on this question. Rajaji pleaded with Bapu in favour of acceptance. The discussions of the Working Committee on this question were carried on for over two days. At the close of the first day, Bapu was seen inclined towards the view held by Rajaji and some others like myself. Obviously convinced of the correctness of this line of argument, he began to plead in favour of it and disarm opposition. The atmosphere was tense. No one knew what the decision of the Working Committee

was going to be. The Governments of India and Britain were anxious to know the result, for, peace and tranquillity in India hung on this decision. All sorts of speculations were given out in the Press by anxious and restless pressmen getting no news from the source. On the second day, *The Times of India* came out with broad headlines that the Congress would accept the statements as assurances and would decide to accept responsibility and assume office. This was a bit of intelligent speculation by its correspondent.

Truly Bapu's advocacy changed the balance in favour of acceptance, but the situation was still fluid on the second day. Opinion, however, soon crystallized. In the result, the process was easy, and the decision was quick and unanimous on the third day. The resolution was passed and issued to the press to the great relief of both the Government and the public and no less of the waiting pressmen.

In the course of the Congress agitation on this important issue, Bapu's great contribution was the idea of a "gentlemen's agreement" between the British Government and the people of India, to the effect that the Governors would not interfere in the day-to-day administration of the Congress ministers. This new deal—the gentlemen's agreement—became largely a substitution for the Government of India Act of 1935. The result was that in all our differences between provincial Governors and ourselves, we hardly referred to the Government of India Act of 1935, but often relied upon the assurances contained in the statements of the Governor-General and the British Cabinet as the basis of our acceptance of office.

I feel that few in India understood the working of the British mind better than Gandhiji. This reminds me of a number of incidents during the stormy period of 1938-39, and especially the Dane incident, which threatened to disrupt all the provincial administrations carried on by the Congress ministers in India. The moment I was informed of the appointment of a subordinate civilian officer of Orissa as the Acting Governor of the province, I took no time to lodge my protest to the Governor-General, through the Governor, a warning as to the consequences that would flow from this step. Subsequent talks took place of which certain portions only were on record. When Bapu and Sardar Patel came to Delhi, in March 1938 to attend the Gandhi Seva Sangh Conference, the whole account was given to them. Bapu talk-

endorsed the steps so far taken, and desired to know whether everything had been in black and white. With a smile he warned me how the Britishers were clever politicians and would take an advantage of the fact that things were left to recollections. At once I saw my folly. A reply from me to a letter from the Governor was due just then. I took advantage of it, marshalled everything that had taken place in the course of the negotiations, and put it in my reply. The Governor's reply was received two days later. The reply was produced, and Bapu was fully satisfied. The episode was closed subsequently, to the satisfaction of all concerned, resulting in the annulment of Mr. Dane's appointment as Acting Governor.

New Delhi.  
15-11-1948

## BAPU ON NATIONAL LANGUAGE

*Arun Chandra Dasgupta*

**I**T was in the days of my early childhood, when my parents stayed at the Sabarmati Ashram for a time, that I first saw Bapu in an atmosphere most congenial to him. To me he seemed hale and hearty, laughing brightly, talking with little children, teasing elders, and even teaching women the art of cooking. Prayers were held in the small hours of the morning, and in the evening, on the prayer ground—a sandy square on the bank of the river. We, children, used to sit in the front row face to face with Bapu who sat separate (along with the Pandit leading the prayer), facing the whole congregation. We indulged in whispers or low buzzing chatters among ourselves until Bapu appeared with sure, steady, quick strides, and took his seat. I enjoyed sitting right opposite to him. After taking his seat he would look around him with a keen eye and when, presumably, he was satisfied that everything was all right, he would give the signal for starting the prayers. One day, as I was sitting for the prayers with my back bent and head drooping, Bapu looked at me and said in Hindi "Arun, sit erect." It was a lesson which, happily, I have never forgotten.

It was the 8th of June, 1934. Bapu was returning to Wardha at the end of his 'walking pilgrimage' in Orissa.

He was to change the train at Kharagpur where he had to halt for three hours. I had reached there at noon, and, on his arrival at 4 in the afternoon, made my way with great difficulty through the seething crowd in order to reach him in a waiting room. He was sitting on a bedstead and spinning on a box-charkha. He recognised me, and began to question me about my health, my parents, our colleagues, and the progress of our work. He spoke in a rather low tone, probably in order to conserve his energy. Once, as I could not follow him, I said, "I am a little hard of hearing, Bapu. Would you please repeat?" He laughed heartily and said, "Hard of hearing, hard of hearing! Then I'll give you a good thump!" He brandished his right arm, and did give me a good thump on the back!

When the Bombay Mail arrived, he rose and walked towards the door. A gentleman suddenly appeared in front of him, and insisted on having his say. He was a Bengali, and began in English, "I am a humble preacher of Hindi in Bengal." He described the difficulties facing a preacher of Hindi in Bengal. He then asked his stock question which, he said, he was being asked everywhere and to which he had not been able to give a satisfactory answer. People asked him, he said, why should Hindi be the national language? Why not Bengali? Bengali was a far richer language than Hindi, richer in literature, grace, and power of expression, etc. Bengal had produced many literary giants who had created world literature in Bengali and thereby elevated the standard of the language to the highest stage of development. Therefore Bengali should be the language of India and not Hindi, they argued, and that Bengali alone had the quality and eligibility of being the national language.

Bapu gave him a patient hearing. Then he said, "My dear friend, if richness of literature be the criterion by which the eligibility of a national language or *lingua franca* is to be judged, then why do you not go in for Sanskrit? Sanskrit is a far richer language than Bengali, and nobody can deny that. Then why not Sanskrit? Why not English? Why not Latin or Greek? Tell me why not? All these languages are richer than Bengali from the standpoint of literary treasures and excellence."

Bapu was standing by the side of a round table which was surrounded by us. He placed his right hand on the table, lifted his left fore-finger and pointed it to the gentleman, stared him in the face and asked a sharp and pointed

"why" from which there was absolutely no escape! The jabbing thrust of these "whys" completely nonplussed the gentleman, and he kept silent. He was evidently feeling ill at ease and confused.

However, Bapu relented gradually. He then added in a quieter and softer tone: "Look here, the true criterion by which the eligibility or otherwise of a national language should be judged is wide circulation and universal understandability among the masses of people. This is the one and only quality by which a language can serve the purpose of a national language. Otherwise, if it cannot serve as a link between different provinces, between people speaking different mother tongues, if it cannot serve as an easy and convenient medium of expression and intercommunication between one part of the country and another, it can never aspire after that high and glorious status, however rich it may be in literature. Today Hindi (or Hindustani) is the only language in India which is easily and universally understood and spoken throughout the length and breadth of the country. Naturally and invariably, people of different provinces, and of different strata of society, resort to Hindi for inter-communication. They do it not out of any patriotic spirit, but out of sheer necessity and practical expediency. Hindi has thus, automatically, become the national language of India, and we are only striving for its recognition as such. This recognition will eliminate many of the difficulties and confusions with which we are presently confronted, and it will bring about a sound and wholesome change in our educational policy."

The Bombay Mail had already started in. He, therefore finished his lively discourse with a radiant, parting smile, greeted everyone present with folded hands, and got into a third-class compartment reserved for him.

Sodepur,  
19-11-48

## THE LAST JOURNEY

*Melville de Mellow*

"FATHER, FORGIVE THEM"

HOW does one write about a saint? Ever since I was asked to contribute an article on the passing away of Mahatma Gandhi, I have asked myself that question. As I sit down to fulfil my promise I am still not sure of the answer. I am a radio commentator, and I was flung by fate and circumstance into a ringside seat from where I was destined to see the last heart-breaking days, hours and minutes of Bapu's last journey. To me it was a long night of tears—a nightmare of sorrow and tragedy which even to this day defies description. As time goes by and the pain of those moments slowly subsides, certain pictures register more clearly on my mind than others. These are the pictures I am going to write about—unusual pictures perhaps—but pictures I shall never forget none the less.

It was the morning of the cremation. I reached Birla House at 6 o'clock to take Bapu's dashbun before the crowds arrived, but already there was a long twisting line of mourners slowly filing past the windows of his room. I met a member of the household who took me by a private entrance into the room. There lay the great Mahatma, his fine broad chest uncovered. I shuddered when I saw the bullet-wounds—dark ominous patches of hate and madness. And then I saw his face! 'What a wonderful face it was in death!' As I looked, the face of the mourners melted into hazy nothingness, the smell of incense may have been reaching me from some distant garden in Paradise—the chanting likewise may have been the chanting of angels as Bapu's spirit climbed heavenwards. Only the face held me—the face among the flying rose-petals that cascaded through the open window. As I gazed at that face, words raced through my mind slowly penetrating the numbness of body and soul—words I had learnt so well in my childhood. Words that Jesus Christ used on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Bapu's lips seemed to be moving and saying just that. His was the most forgiving countenance I have ever looked upon. As I stood there in silence, someone near me tried unsuc-

cessfully to hold back a sob. I turned my head to look straight into the tortured face of India's Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The look on his face was also something I shall never forget. I left quietly, left behind for a moment the greatest man of our age in that room of tears, tragedy and rose-petals.

#### FAREWELL, WITH ROSE-PETALS

It was during the State funeral cortege. My radio-van crawled slowly along Queensway, Kingsway, Hardinge Avenue and Bela Road on its way to Raj Ghat. Just behind us, slowly moved the trailer on which lay the body of Mahatma Gandhi, exposed to public gaze. Around the body like figures in marble stood Pandit Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Devadas Gandhi, Sardar Baldev Singh, Acharya Kripalani and Dr. Rajendraprasad. Millions lined the route—millions sang his favourite hymns—millions shouted his name—and all wept—nowhere did I see a dry eye. We neared the District Jail—where two months earlier Bapu had addressed a meeting of convicts—and it was here that I was to witness the biggest demonstrations of love and affection along that sad and solemn road which led to the cremation ground. The heavens were raining rose-petals—Dakotas streaked across the sky and showered rose-petals and garlands on the bier—dipping their wings reverently as they flew away—bushfuls of flowers were flung from tree-tops and neighbouring buildings—"Mahatma Gandhi ki jai", thundered from a million parched lips—the millions of the city who had taken up their stand at this point from an early hour.

The cortege stopped here for a few minutes as the crowd surged forward to take a last dashon. Our radio-van pulled up also, and as I gazed at the agonized faces of the people lining the roads I heard a woman whisper: "It doesn't seem possible. It seems to me that he will be back tomorrow at the prayer gathering, reassuring us all that it was just a mistake." And then I realized she was talking to herself—trying to convince herself, for her neighbour was a beggar—a decrepit old man, with swollen tearful eyes, blue lips, bristling ears and unclean sores. One who had looked too long, poor soul, over the hopeless landscape of an empty life of poverty. I saw him weep unashamedly, and the well-dressed woman wept too. And I thought, how wonderful, tragedy has brought these two people closer than they have ever been before!

Gandhiji was all India that has toiled and suffered. His simplicity drew a world of hearts.

As our van moved slowly onwards I heard a child innocently ask her mother, "Has he gone for ever? Is he never coming back?" The mother's reply was drowned by the clip clop of the horses, the rhythmic scuffling of marching men and the sound of sobbing.

### THE CREMATION

I reached Raj Ghat five minutes before the funeral cortege arrived. Our second radio-van was already in position about thirty yards from the cremation spot. I scrambled on to the roof of the van to get above the crowds. One of the first things that struck me was the elaborate arrangements made for keeping the crowds in check. Long lines of R.I.A.F. personnel surrounded the cremation spot—standing shoulder to shoulder and reinforced by the police. Then the cortege arrived, and a great wailing went up from the millions that had packed themselves tightly into that green saucerlike piece of hollowed earth called Raj Ghat. The sun went down as the first flames leapt skywards from the sandalwood pile. A great moan went up from the crowds as they surged forward. It was as if a storm had broken over Raj Ghat. This was a storm of the spirit. On they came—these tragic men and women—ironing out barricades, ropes, wire, guards and police. They milled around the sandalwood pile as the flames leapt higher and higher and the smell of sandalwood filled the twilight. Soon Raj Ghat was a sea of moving heads. Governors Ambassadors Cabinet Ministers—all were one here on this green patch of earth by the sacred waters of the Jumuna. Looking out over the heads of this continuous unbroken mass of humanity I felt as helpless as an ant adrift on a leaf in the middle of a whirlpool.

As the flames rose higher and higher and darkness approached, the crowds pressed forward and the dust of a million moving feet filled the air over Raj Ghat. These millions had begun to realise fully that the future that lay before them would be a lonely one without the Father of Liberty and Love to guide them. In the flames they saw their last hopes die—their hopes of seeing him smile again or of hearing him say 'Brothers and Sisters'. Many would have been happy to fling themselves on to the fire and say good-bye to this world of meanness and corruption. Many would have been happy to mix their ashes

with the Apostle of Truth and Non-violence who was born into a world of Untruth and Violence. As I looked out over the heads of these tragic people, I suddenly felt a lump in my throat—a lump that I had been trying hard to swallow all day. I made a few incoherent remarks about listening to the crowds—put the microphone above my head, and gave vent to my feelings under the cloak of some violent nose-blowing. After that, I no longer felt like an ant adrift on a leaf in a whirlpool—I felt one with the heart-broken, tragic millions that groaned to the Heavens under the silver pepper of the stars—beseeching the Unknown to return the known—the loved, the tried and the true.

I sat on the hood of my van many hours after the commentary was over, waiting for the crowds to diminish. By this time I was in strange company. A woman who had fainted had been lifted to the hood for safety, as also a little girl and a boy who had almost been trampled to death. And then, I noticed a hand trying to take hold of the edge of the hood. I looked over and saw it was the Prime Minister—Pandit Nehru—I grasped the groping hand and lifted him to the roof of the van. "Have you seen the Governor-General?" he asked. "He left half an hour ago," I replied. "Have you seen Sardar Patel?" "He left a few minutes after the Governor-General," I replied. I soon realized that in the general chaos friends had lost friends. As the crowd recognized Pandit Nehru they surged round our van expecting him to speak. A wonderful thought passed through my mind as I knelt near this great man. How logical it seemed! There the flames leapt over the body of the Departed Father; here stood a son of India, his closest follower, taking up the Torch of Freedom and rededicating himself to the Nation.

At 2 o'clock next morning on my way back home I drove to Raj Ghat. The embers were smouldering, the crowds had melted, and the restless dust had settled back. A guard had now been placed on the site. As I looked out over Raj Ghat, I reconstructed the scene all over again. Through the darkness I thought I saw the upright figure of a man in spotlessly white khadi, with a grim look of determination on his face, looking out over the heads of his countrymen. He was a figure I had knelt near a few hours before—it was the figure to which all eyes turn in these days—for hope and success—the figure of Jawaharlal Nehru.

## LAST JOURNEY

The last journey. New Delhi, February 11th—and the time is 4.30 a.m. I am standing opposite the green *asthi* special opposite the compartment in which the urn containing Gandhiji's ashes was placed. It was the middle carriage of a special train composed of third class carriages—because the Mahatma always travelled third class. The middle carriage—what a blaze of colour! The rectangular table, on which the palanquin with the urn was laid was covered with a handspun tri-coloured national-flag over which was a chadder of flowers woven in green mirraja leaves, white phloxes and saffron-coloured calendulas. On this rested a beautiful wreath of snow-white phlox. At each end of the carriage hung carpets of multi-coloured phlox worked into a picturesque design. Wreaths of phlox decorated each side mixed with candy tuft and sweet sultans. The ceiling was completely covered with a huge national tricolour. Floodlights illuminated the central wreath, and it was into this wreath that the urn carrying the sacred ashes of Mahatma Gandhi, was placed. The dark green of the cycas palms added to the solemnity of the occasion. It was a fairyland of flowers—purple, pink, red, white and saffron—but saffron predominated.

Flowers have an expression of countenance as much as men or animals. Some seem to smile, and some have a sad and lovely expression.

Outside, on the platform, thousands of people filed past for a last *darshan*. At 6.30 a whistle blew, and the green coaches pulled out of New Delhi station—people wept as the train carried away the last mortal remains of Bapu—others threw handfuls of rose-petals and garlands—chanting *swastis*—others just stood in silence—bowed their heads and placed their palms together reverently, too broken to look up—too grief-stricken to do ought but bow in grief—adoration—and homage to the one who had taught them how to hold their heads high.

## "SPRING'S SORROW"

Cold dawn broke deep-red over Delhi as the long green coaches pulled slowly away. Early crows flew silently by our side—flying high, then low—dipping their wings as it were in homage. Our compartment was next to the middle carriage containing the urn with Gandhiji's ashes. As I looked out across the fields and at the faces of

the mourners who lined the railway track my heart was heavy. It was Spring, and the fields were gold with mustard. Like a rippling blanket they stretched to the horizons intermittently touched by wind—on and on till the end of time—and yet something was lacking. All this beauty seemed out of key—the heart could not leap with joy at the sight of Nature, because, down each little pathway dividing field from field, one saw the ghostlike footprints of a man who had carried his blistered feet over the length and breadth of rural India—preaching to the peasants, who now wept silently as the *asthi* special sped by. Many were covered with dust and dirt indicative of miles and miles of trekking. Outside, the engine threw wreaths of black smoke over the yellow fields. Gentle breezes carried these smoke-chaplets solemnly over fence and field.

And so the *asthi* special continued on its last journey. The crowds that came for *darsana* at Ghaziabad, Khurja, Aligarh, Hathras, Tundla, Ferozabad, Etawah, Phaphund, Kanpur, Fatepur and Razoolabad were gigantic. At Tundla our carriage became a dispensary for fainting women, trampled children and injured soldiers. The crowds came in their thousands, and none left without throwing his or her offering of flowers or taking a last *darsana*. And all the way, the music of the *maszras* was in our ears, and beautiful voices, full of sadness, yet full of hope. Or, on and on, like the steady relentless rhythm of the wheels below us, the voices read from the Gita. And I wondered as I listened, as the wind tossed the words over the golden mustard, I wondered if they were saying:

He who shall say, "Lo! I have slain a man!"

He who shall think, "Lo! I am slain!" those both

Know naught! Life cannot slay. Life is not slain!

Never the spirit was born, the spirit shall cease to be never

#### A RED ROSE

"Would you like an orange?" I suddenly remembered I had not eaten anything and I looked into the kind face of the bestower who had moved to the window next to mine. I liked him immediately, and soon I was being told all the lovely intimate sides to Bapu's character—his love of children and of the small things of life that really make life worth living. My friend was V. A. Sundaram, Gandhi's disciple for thirty-two years. I remember we

had just left Fatepur. Men and boys had raced along with the train for almost a mile outside the station, with hands outstretched for flowers from the urn, or their shirts held out in front of them. Now, as the train picked up speed, they fell back, and their shouts of "Long Live Mahatma Gandhi" faintly reached us as we pulled farther away. My friend was preoccupied with a deep red rose. He looked up with tears in his eyes as if anticipating the question. "This was the rose that I had placed on one of the bullet-wounds,"—he whispered. No more conversation passed between us. Outside the sun went down in a blaze of scarlet and gold. I touched the rose and thought it looked lovelier than ever as its faint perfume filled the twilight. As I gazed out of the window the train slowed down to pass through a minor station. Above us, on a house overlooking the track stood a soldier, on guard and in full battle-dress, silhouetted against the stars. He bowed reverently as the special passed by. It was the homage of the warrior to the martyr.

#### "THEY CAME TO A RIVER"

Millions en route paid their last homage—millions wept, millions filed past the carriage shouting or whispering "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai". Millions prayed, millions sobbed unashamedly—and these millions belonged to all walks of life.

The feelings of Indians found expression in shouts of "Long live Gandhi!", in streams of floral tributes, or in tears. And so at last the journey ended at Prayag, King of the holy places—when they came to a River.

At the holy Triveni, the mortal remains of Mahatma Gandhi were immersed. The ashes of the holiest and saintliest of human beings of our age were immersed at the confluence regarded as the most sacred by Hinduism from time immemorial. I saw the ashes being immersed in the sacred waters by Mr. Ramdas Gandhi. I was standing in an open boat about forty yards away from the sacred "duck". Thousands of people had waded-in to get a closer view. As the urn was emptied thousands cupped the waters of the river and drank long and deep. Barrels of milk were emptied into the river—and the water was shining white. At that moment starlings flew across the sky like handfuls of black confetti. It was the journey's end. He had touched the Infinite and shared the

divine current that thrills all high souls. As for those who witnessed this last sacred ceremony—maybe they felt as I did when I said a few days later "on the air":

"O Lord, I do not serve in the temple mine is no solemn office nor critical station, but I thank thee that the River of God flows through the streets of the city and whosoever will—may drink!"

Darkness fell over Prayag, and the lamps were lit. We prepared to leave and took one last look at Triveni Sangam. Now the lamps multiplied—like the slow punctuation of fireflies in the garden. The stars leaned close, and some lost their hold and fell away. The stars and the lamps! Bapu was amongst the stars, and his memory was like the myriad lamps that shone through the darkness. Yes, the lamp still shines, and its light will penetrate far into space and time and continue to shine, as long as our civilisation lasts.

Delhi.

2-10-1948

## BAFU AND MY FATHER

*Narayan Mahadev Desai*

**I** WAS nine then. It was my first stay with Bapu for a month. We had long since been great friends, but I never had an opportunity till now to stay with him for such a long period. He had just finished his 21 days' fast at 'Parnakuti' in Poona. My father was busy the whole day, mostly in requesting visitors to spare Bapu as much as possible.

I had a severe attack of malaria, and the temperature remained high for two days. Father was very anxious about me, but he was unable to sit by my side for long. Whenever he came to me I asked him to send for my mother who was at Satarmata. He did not consider it necessary to do so for he felt it would be a useless expenditure of the nation's money. The temperature did not come down even on the third day, and I became delirious. In my delirium too I raved for my mother's presence. Manu Bapu's granddaughter, chanced to see my father trying without success to restrain his tears. She carried the report to Ba who, in her turn, conveyed it

to Bapu. He at once called my father and asked him to bring a telegraphic form and take down a message he would dictate. Father imagined it was some ordinary 'business' telegram. When, however, Bapu dictated the text asking my mother to come soon, Father was amazed and argued against sending the wire. "There are several friends here who can attend to Babla, and Dr. Dargha is always available," he said. "It is quite unnecessary, therefore, to call Darga." "Well," replied Bapu, "I have only asked you to take down my message. I never asked your opinion on it. I ask you to send this wire now, and you must send it." Mother came in response to the telegram. I came to know of this incident only when Father related it to me after a couple of days with a smile on his face.

Bapu was to go to Madras to attend the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan to be held there in March 1937. I was eager to go with him as I had never been to Madras before. I knew he would take me with him for the asking, but I was afraid he would then refuse to take me later to the Gandhi Seva Sangh Conference to be held at Hudli next month. Bapu had shifted, about a year previously, to Sevagram, but we still lived at Maganvadi in Wardha, as Sevagram had no post office then. On his way to the station Bapu came to Maganvadi just for a peep as the train was late by a few minutes. He asked me with a touch of humour, "Don't you feel like going with me?"

"I do feel like it, but I have not spoken, for fear that you would refuse later on to take me to Hudli."

"The promise to take you to Hudli stands. Now would you like to go to Madras?"

I still hesitated to say 'yes'. So he cut the Gordian knot by saying "Let us have a toss." He asked my mother to give him a pice. She was infected by his jocular spirit, and brought a pice at once. Bapu then asked me with a smile, "Come on, say 'King or cross?'" It was wholly a question of chance, but in a childish spirit I preferred the cross to the King who was a foreigner. Bapu tossed the pice, and I won! Bapu said "Hurry up, Darga, get together his clothes for the journey. I must leave this place in five minutes."

Just then my father, who was to accompany Bapu as usual, arrived on the scene. He said to me, "It is not proper for you, Babla, to prepare to go just because Bapu

made the offer as a fun." To Bapu he said: "Why do you waste so much money in this way?"

"It is not a waste," replied Bapu. "He will be very useful to both of us."

"But he is not indispensable to either of us."

"That is not a sound argument, Mahadev. We are not going to send him to a regular school. If he does not accompany us in our tours, when will he get a chance to be trained?"

Father still opposed the proposal. Bapu said: "But I have given him a promise, and you won't wish me to break it, would you?"

Father had no reply to this. Since then I formed part of Bapu's entourage in all his journeys.

On our way back from Madras Shri Jannalals spoke to Bapu about the serene atmosphere at Shri Raman Maharshi's ashram. Bapu said: "Mahadev, why don't you go and see the place? The sooner the better." I began to pack Father's luggage, as it was decided that he would take the train back from Bezwada. When the luggage was packed and the train was passing over the Kutrns bridge, very near to Bezwada station, Bapu said, as if in continuation of his previous sentence, "and you can as well stay on for two or three months, if you find the atmosphere peaceful."

To our amazement Father unpacked his things. "Bapu," he said with a serious voice, "one Master is enough for me. I need not see the place."

The train moved on.

Father's health broke down in April 1942, and he had frequent attacks of giddiness. Doctors advised him to take complete rest, but he did not like to leave Bapu when there were talks of the coming struggle, the gravity of which was foreshadowed in Bapu's writings and utterances. "How can I take rest at this juncture?" Father said to his friends. But he had to yield to Bapu's own pressure, and agreed to go to Nasik for about a fortnight's rest. He started for the place one evening.

In about an hour a telephone message from Wardha came to Sevagram saying that Father had an attack of giddiness at the station and was in a serious condition, and that the Civil Surgeon had taken him to his own bungalow. Bapu sent word in reply, asking Father to be re-

moved at once to Sevagram. It was Sunday evening, and Bapu had already started his weekly silence. On Father's arrival, however, Bapu broke the silence, and gently asked, "How are you, Mahadev?" Father lay his head at Bapu's feet and said, "Bapu, I should like to meet death, when it comes, with my head in your lap." He could say nothing more. Tears were streaming from his eyes. Bapu put him into the bed which was ready. He then sat by Father's side and began to fan him. "I know this quite well," he then said. "Therefore I asked the Civil Surgeon to send you here at once, and told him that you would be cured nowhere else, and that there is every chance of your being cured if you are near me."

On the 8th of August, 1942, after Bapu returned late at night from the A.L.C.C. meeting, those who were near him began to guess what would happen next. Bapu said emphatically, "Surely they won't arrest me after the speech I made this evening. I have said therein that I will still carry on correspondence with the Viceroy for about a fortnight; they won't, therefore, arrest me for that period at least." Father was of the view that Bapu would be arrested immediately. The air was thick with rumours about Bapu's destination after the arrest. Bapu, however, was firm in his opinion that he would not be arrested just then. After a while he went to bed, and asked others to do so. But there were two persons who could not sleep—Ba (Kasturba) and my father. At two o'clock in the night when I suddenly awoke, I heard the following conversation taking place between them.

Ba. Mahadev, how many strokes did you hear just now?

M.D. Two.

Ba. Do you still feel that Bapu will be arrested?

M.D. I do feel, Ba, that he will be arrested. But perhaps after all he may not be. Hitherto whenever our own readings have differed from those of Bapu, he has always in the end proved to be right. This may happen even now though I have no doubt he will be arrested.

The talk ended there. During the next two hours Ba several times asked my father, "Are you not asleep, Mahadev?"

"How can I get sleep?" Father replied.

When it was four, even Father began to feel that the arrest won't take place just then, but in a few minutes the police arrived.

The police officer had warrants for Bapu, Mirabehn and my father, and had instructions to take Ba and Pyarelal with him if they wished to accompany Bapu. They were, however, free to decide for themselves. Father was happy because he was being taken along with Bapu. But for Ba it was a testing time. It was quite likely that Bapu would undertake a fast in the jail. Ba asked him: "What shall I do?" Bapu smiled a little, and then seriously said: "It is for you to decide. You are free to come with me. But I should like you to remain free just now, and court imprisonment later by some act of civil disobedience."

Ba was in a dilemma. She was very eager not to be separated from Bapu, as there was every fear of the Government allowing Bapu to die in prison if he undertook a fast on going there. Bapu, on the other hand, wished her to remain out for the time being. However, she did not take long to make up her mind. She said to Bapu: "I should have very much loved to go with you, but I will keep back since you wish me to do so."

"I knew," said Bapu with an air of satisfaction, "that you would take this decision. I had no doubt about it."

Vedchha,  
10-10-1948

## SATYAGRAHA IN SOUTH AFRICA

*Pragji Desai*

**I**F was in the year 1906 that I went to South Africa at the age of 22. My sole purpose was to earn money and help my family which had seen very hard days because of poverty. But fate seemed to have ordained something quite different for me. Within three days of my landing in Durban I was led to throw myself into Gandhiji's hands. A well-known doctor of Bombay, Sir Bhulchandra Krishna Bhatavdekar, who was a friend of my uncle, had given me a note of introduction to 'Barrister Gandhi'. I had imagined that I should be able to earn money with the help of this barrister. In Durban I came to know that Gandhiji had just returned from England to Durban. At about 1 p.m. I went to the house of the late Han Omar Amad Zaveri where he had put up. I peeped into the

house from the window on the verandah, and saw more than a dozen Muslim gentlemen having a lunch at a table, at the head of which sat a man with a peculiar black turban which distinguished him from the others. I at once guessed who he was, and sent in the note of introduction with a servant with instructions to give it to 'Bar-rister Gandhi'. The servant placed it into his hands, while I kept on looking in from the window. He opened the note, read it, and at once got up. I was standing on the verandah. My heart was throbbing. A charming and lovable person came out to the verandah with the note in his hand, and asked me if I was the bearer of the note. I said, "Yes," with a respectful bow. He at once said: "Come, come," took me to the drawing room, and asked me to be seated on a sofa. He sat next to me and asked me detailed questions as to when I had arrived in Durban, what I had been doing in Bombay, how far I had studied, and so on. I gave suitable replies to all the questions. For a couple of minutes he sat thanking, and then asked me "What has brought you to South Africa?" I said, "I have come here to earn money. I am a very poor man and I request you to help me in fulfilling my wishes." He at once said: "What chance is there for earning money here? Our countrymen here are undergoing terrible hardships. Their very existence seems to be in danger. In a day or two I will leave Durban for Johannesburg, and I think of presently launching a struggle of passive resistance against the Transvaal Government. You are a young man. You are fairly educated. You ought not to think of earning money. You ought to be helpful to our countrymen and to serve them."

No one in India had ever spoken to me in this strain. The advice to serve our countrymen I heard for the first time in my life. It set me thinking. "I will go to Phoenix in the evening," Gandhi went on to say. "Come here at about 4-30 p.m., and we will go together. If you like the place, you may settle down there and work in the press where *Indian Opinion* is printed." I promised to join him. During our conversation I happened to look right into his eyes twice or thrice, and saw the love-light in those eyes. It was this deep-seated love that attracted me forcibly to him. I felt comforted and happy as if I was talking to the head of my own family.

I went with him to Phoenix. Next day he was to leave for Johannesburg. I requested him to take me with him. He explained to me that under the Immigra-

tion Act of Transvaal I had no right to enter that territory. I could go there later, he said, and join the struggle against the Government which it was his intention to start before long. He asked me to write to him as often as I liked, and gave me his address at Johannesburg.

Later, under his leadership, the Indians in Transvaal put up a heroic fight. Hundreds of them went to jail. The struggle was naturally prolonged. While it was going on, the Government passed an Immigration Act which prohibited even highly educated Indians from entering that province. Gandhiji considered this to be an insult to India, and he appealed to the educated Indians in South Africa to join the fight.

This was the second phase of the struggle of passive resistance. In a letter to him I expressed my willingness to join the struggle. He wrote back to say that he would soon go to Durban where I might meet him. He also gave me a warning that, if I decided to join the struggle, I must be prepared to face all the consequences. I met him at Durban a little later, and with a few other educated Indians he left for Transvaal. We were arrested on the Transvaal border as prohibited immigrants and were sentenced to six months' hard labour. Gandhiji was not arrested, and was allowed to proceed to Johannesburg. Till the end of the final phase of the struggle in 1914 I had the privilege to go to jail seven times in company with several other comrades.

Bapu's views on education were well known even in those days. Of his four sons three were never sent to any regular 'school'. Whatever education they have received was given at home. The eldest son Harilal, had some schooling at Rajkot. He was not satisfied with the education that he had when he came to South Africa. He felt that Bapu was neglecting his duty as a father to give modern education to him and his brothers. He often pleaded with Bapu to give the brothers a higher education so that they could become barristers or doctors. Bapu refused to give such education to his sons, because he did not set much store by it. Harilal argued in reply that, if Bapu himself had not become a barrister, he would not have been able to do the work that he was doing. Bapu answered by saying that it was not necessary to become barristers and doctors to qualify for service of the people. He cited the examples of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Shrivastav, Prativastav, Dayanand—some of whom

had English education, and who were yet among the greatest Indians of their times. Harilal retorted by citing the examples of Ranade, Gokhale, Tilak, Malaviya and Lajpatrai who had equipped themselves with higher English education and had served the country so well. Such arguments would often go on between father and son, but with no concrete result.

When the great passive resistance movement was started by Bapu, Harilal joined it and took a prominent part in it, undergoing several imprisonments. But he was dissatisfied with the life of simplicity and poverty which Bapu had adopted. Harilal was in those days a friend of mine. We went to jail together, and shared a common life of hardship and labour inside the prison. He often poured out his heart before me. I saw that his discontent was very great.

The passive resistance struggle was postponed by Bapu temporarily in 1911. Harilal took this opportunity, and disappeared from Johannesburg without informing anybody. He had left a very pathetic letter for Bapu who told us that this was the result of reading the Gujarati novel *Sorokutichandra*, in which the young hero disappears in a similar manner, leaving a letter of farewell for the father. Shri Surendra Meeth and I, who were friends of Harilal, had no previous knowledge of his plan. A search was made in vain all over Johannesburg. A Parsi friend gave the information that Harilal had gone to him and borrowed twenty pounds from him. The news of Harilal's disappearance spread quickly, and many friends of Bapu rushed to his office which remained crowded for the whole day. Several Muslim merchants remonstrated with Bapu, saying: "You should have sent him to England for further studies. We would have paid all the expenses." In the evening we left the office with Bapu to go to the Tolstoy Farm at Lawley where we were living. Bapu said to us in the train: "Don't you say anything about Harilal's disappearance to Ra. I myself will reveal the fact to her in my own way." Ra's grief can be imagined when she was told what had happened.

On the third day a friend of ours told us that he definitely knew Harilal was in Lourenco Marques. We conveyed the news to Bapu. Mr. Kallenbach offered to go to Lourenco Marques and bring back Harilal to Johannesburg. Harilal had changed his name so that no one might recognise him as Gandhaji's son. He came back

and the tension was relieved both in the city and at the Tolstoy Farm. At the latter place, father and son alone walked all night over the farm and had a long exchange of views. Next morning at breakfast Bapu announced that Harilal would leave for India the next day. He was to live at Ahmedabad and prosecute his studies in a school.

Next day we all went to Johannesburg to bid good-bye to Harilal. When the train was about to start, Bapu kissed Harilal, gave a gentle slap on his cheek, and said: "Forgive your father, if you think he has done you wrong." It was a most touching scene, and these words of Bapu moved me so deeply that I could not restrain my tears. I said to myself: "What a hard-hearted father!" And at the same time how kind, meek and lovable!"

On the Tolstoy Farm we lived as one big family. As passive resisters we lived mostly on public funds and the small produce of the farm. Bapu was the chef. He was also the server. Each one of us had been given a wooden bowl and a wooden spoon. He once decided to give us olive oil in the place of ghee. Olive oil was healthy but costlier. Before serving it to us Bapu delivered a little sermon to us: "We are passive resisters. We have willingly adopted a life of simplicity and poverty. Moreover we live on public charity. We must therefore be very careful in using costly things. We must not use them in large quantities. We may thus not take any more of this oil than the minimum necessary." We all sat in a line, and went to him at the table one by one with our bowl and spoon: when he would serve out the food to us. I happened to be first in the line that day. I went to him, and he served me rice, dal and vegetables, and then asked me: "How many tea-spoonfuls of olive oil shall I give you?" His sermon was quite fresh in my mind, and I said: "One." I got one teaspoonful, and went back to my seat. Then the next man went to him. He asked for three spoonfuls and got three. The third one wanted four, and got four. The fourth man asked for five and got five. Then Bapu looked at me and had a hearty laugh. "Pragga," he said, "you have to thank yourself for the small quantity of oil that you got!" I replied: "Well, Bapu, I am satisfied with my one teaspoonful." It was apparently a trivial incident, but it made a lasting impression on my mind, and taught me to keep a detailed account of public funds and to use them economically and for no other purpose than the one for which they were earmarked.

ed. I had often to collect funds both in South Africa and in India, and this lesson stood me in good stead on all those occasions.

Gokhale visited South Africa in 1912. According to the report that he gave to Gandhiji, General Botha, the then Prime Minister of the Union, had given him a promise to repeal the three pound tax. After his departure for India, however, General Botha denied having given any such promise to Prof. Gokhale. Gandhiji cabled to Gokhaleji, who replied that General Botha had given him a definite promise to this effect. Gandhiji felt that this involved the honour of Gokhaleji and, therefore, the honour of India. Passive resistance was temporarily suspended.<sup>1</sup>

During this period of suspension the question of the legality of Indian marriages suddenly cropped up. In an Indian's case the Supreme Court at Capetown decided that his marriage, not having been performed according to Christian rites, could not be considered legally valid. Indian marriages, performed according to Hindu, Muslim or Parsi rites, would thus be legally invalid. The judgment came as an earthquake shock to the Indian community. The three pound poll tax and the marriage question became life and death problems to Gandhiji. These questions came up at a time when the spirit of the Indian community was at its lowest ebb. People were tired of going to jail again and again. The struggle had been a prolonged one. Life in jail was very hard. But Gandhiji was made of a sterner stuff. He came to Johannesburg from Phoenix, and immediately on arrival called a meeting of about a dozen old passive resisters who had proved their mettle in the previous campaigns. He had come with an inflexible resolve to 'do or die'. I was present at this memorable meeting. This was the gist of what he said (of course I am quoting from memory):

"I have made my own decision. The legality of our marriages and the three pound poll tax have become religious questions to me. With me they are life and death questions. A fire is raging in my heart. These two acts must be repealed. They involve the honour of our great country. This time no mass meetings are to be held, no resolutions are to be passed, no deputations are to be sent anywhere. We are not going to beg and collect money

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of the controversy refer to Gandhiji's book, *Satyagraha in South Africa*.

from anybody. We will not carry on any press propaganda. I know that the spirit of the community is at its lowest ebb, but that does not worry me. We have proclaimed to the world that in the code of satyagraha there is no such word as 'defeat'. Can truth ever suffer defeat? I certainly want every one of you to join the struggle. But this time my conditions are very strict. If you wish to line up with me, you must first of all forget your wife, children and other members of the family. You must forget even India. You must decide to fight, though non-violently, till death. If you join me, well and good. If, however, you don't join me, I do not care. I have often said that one true satyagrahi can carry on the struggle, because it is a struggle to be carried on with soul force. If you don't join, I have decided to carry on the struggle single-handed but with the utmost vigour. I will wander like a mad man throughout South Africa. I will go from house to house and will rouse our people to join me in this sacred cause. I will fight till the end of my life, and will see the three pound poll tax and the marriage act repealed. I must do or die. I am also considering whether our womenfolk should take part in the struggle or not. Their own honour is also at stake. Up till now we have not asked them to join the struggle. I ask your opinion on this question too. I should now like to know your own decision."

While I was listening very attentively to the fiery words which came from the very depth of his heart, I had decided to take a plunge. I felt that even death in this great cause under the leadership of such a brave and fearless man would be glorious. The stalwart satyagrahis, who were present, all said 'yes'. No one wavered for a moment. The result immensely pleased the leader. Finally, before we parted, Gandhiji said: "I will now go to Phoenix and chalk out our programme. This time we are going to fight in such a way that even gods will descend to see us fighting!" The meeting decided after a full discussion that our womenfolk also should be invited to participate in the struggle and court imprisonment. The subsequent events, ending in the Gandhi-Smuts agreement of 1914, have been described at length by the leader of the movement himself in his *Satyagraha in South Africa*.

(Sale)

10-10-1948

## MY FIRST VISIT TO MAHATMA GANDHI

*Habibullah Khan*

I WAS going to Mahatma Gandhi for the first time. To me he represented the Hindu of Hindus — the essence of the oldest India. Unconscious expectancy made me especially sensitive to my environment during that drive . . . . Our car drew up in an open field where stood a two-storeyed stone building, flying the Congress flag.

The facade of the house was towards the other side, overlooking a vast field where, in the distance, fires were being lighted and figures in white were moving about. The fires were yet only wreaths of smoke curling upwards lazily. There was a spacious porch before the house into which all the rooms of the first floor opened, including that of Mahatma Gandhi. His was a large room with a concrete floor. In the corner facing the entrance were a mat, a floor cushion, and a low desk, such as we used in old days in Turkey. Papers and books were on the desk and scattered over the cushion.

The face might be that of any Hindu, I thought. Yet it had none of the mystery and closed-in-ness of Hindu faces. Nothing could be more clear-cut and sharply defined than this triangular, dark, serene face. The mouth was large and toothless except for a single front tooth. The lips were closed over each other tightly, yet they did not give the impression of forbidding grimace or sunken old age. With the long nose its tip curling over the lips, the mouth made one think its owner might be easily amused, and have a tendency to give and take jokes. As I saw it first, the face was very grave. The eyes were deep-set and clear and slightly drawn towards the narrow temples, somewhat in a Mongolic fashion. But the eye-folds were not Mongolic. They were distinctly Hindu very tastily drawn towards the raised delicate eyebrows. As the face bent forward there appeared a baldish dome with a Hindu-lock, a tiny curl on the top of it.

"He has a magnetic personality — everyone who comes in touch with him loses all capacity for clear judgment — everyone who knows him becomes too emotional to be trusted to be objective." I was told that by several people including some English.

As I sat there I thought "If people are carried away by emotion, it must be that they are excitable, and in search for emotion instead of truth." Mahatma Gandhi seemed to me the best person in the world to appeal to the emotional to make any attempt to capture the fancy or create fantasy and mystery around himself; though his religious nature is undeniable, and some of his talk may occasionally lead one to term him as a mystic. I had gone there with an honest determination to understand him and not to indulge in emotion and I felt more than ever that I must not give way either to my former prejudice caused by the over-sensational European propaganda or the sympathy and admiration his person inspired. He is so important a happening in twentieth-century history, I said to myself, that every witness must leave as objective and honest a report as is humanly possible.

The door opened continually. Men in all sorts of costumes came in and fell on their faces at the fringe of the mat, then sat, their hands folded on their knees. I recognized some of the faces belonging to Congress members or to people in other leading positions, intellectual, spiritual or otherwise. This sort of salute may appear to the Western eye as servile, but it is not. It is rather the Eastern reverence for those whom they believe to be spiritually great. The wonder of it was that it should survive a modern, a scientific, a materialistically Western education. It was evident that they had submerged themselves in Mahatma Gandhi's personality. That kind talked little. But there were others who came to consult him, or to have his blessings on some enterprise, and some came to tell him what they were going to do. The range of subjects on which he is consulted is infinite. It is almost inconceivable for most of the Hindus and a considerable number of Muslims to do anything without his knowledge. This applies also to political life, though Mahatma Gandhi has retired from politics. Whether the general desire to consult Mahatma Gandhi is due to a mystical and spiritual adoration, or to a recognition of the excellence of his judgment, merely a habit of doing what the rest of the world does, it results in taking up an enormous amount of his time and energy. His economy of words I often thought was a reaction to being perpetually talked to.

Meanwhile mats were being spread on the left. Men and women were walking towards the mats and then sitting in rows. Mothers brought their children leading

them by the hand or carrying them in their arms. Quite soon a crowd in the form of a great horseshoe had gathered. At the open end of the horseshoe a few carpets had been placed. No more gold in the sky, but the dusk was velvety. The fires, which had been smoking, were now flames licking the dusk, while tiny groups of people appeared as white smudges against them. A gong sounded when I also was settled on a mat. Mahatma Gandhi descended the steps of the porch, and sat at the centre of the opening.

Children moved and whispered, mothers leaned over and tried to silence them. There was something contagious in the happiness of the little ones, they seemed more aware of what was happening than their elders. No wonder, for there was a childlike simplicity about the whole scene. Behind me a mother was feeding her baby at her breast. I could hear the cluck, cluck of the tiny throat as it swallowed. And the old pandit opposite was tuning his sitar. I could distinguish a few faces from Jamia. At the moment it was the atmosphere rather than the motionless figure of Mahatma Gandhi that took hold of the crowd. He was only a unit. Yet I watched him. By some freak of light, or rather because of the thinness of his shoulders, his draperies stood out both sides in sharp angles. Everything about him seemed to have fallen into a geometrical shape. Wrapt in that white mantle, his shoulders two edges, his face immobile, he looked like Buddha.

"Raghavur Tumko mere lay . . ." sang the pandit, accompanying with his sitar. The music of the strings trailed on, and the whole crowd, the whole place, even the man who looked like Buddha, dissolved in it. I had heard nothing like it in all my life. Beethoven at times reaches a height where one is no longer harassed by emotion, but aware only of a serene intellectuality. This tune not only lacked the disturbance of emotion, but freed one from one's body. One really did rise above one's bodily existence without getting into a sweeping mystical rapture. One was given rest, and released from all worry, and from the consciousness of the accumulated trash of the past.

The tune is old and the words are equally so, being from Tulsidas, the Hindu mystic poet of the fifteenth century. As Mahadev Desai translated them to me they sounded familiar. They are a prayer for redemption and reminiscent of our own mystics though of two centuries earlier.

"O Raghuvaram! Thy shame is my shame. I am ever seeking Thy protection, and Thou art noted as the protector of the weak. I have heard it said of Thee that it is Thy promise that Thou wouldst save sinners. And I am an old sinner, take my ship ashore,--"

These words were not in keeping with the music. The tune relieves one of all longing, even for redemption. It goes better with the state of mind expressed by certain verses of the Gita recited also in the evening prayers.

"The man who casts off all longing and walks without concern and free from the sense of 'I' and 'Mine' he attains peace."

"He in whom all longings subside, even as the waters subside in the ocean, which though ever being filled by them never overflows—that man finds peace."

As long as the tune lasts one feels neither sinful nor conscious of any imperfection in one's self or in one's fellow creatures.

"Raghupati Raghava Rajaaram," sang the pandit

"Raghupati Raghava Rajaaram," sang the crowd

"Patita Pavana Sitarama," sang the pandit

"Patita Pavana Sitarama," sang the crowd lustily.

There were thick huzzas, contraltos, baby tremolos. men beat time on their knees or snapped their fingers, women swung their bodies right and left, the whole thing was becoming swifter and livelier. "Jawara, jawara, jai jawara," sang the pandit. "Jawara, jawara, jai jawara," sang the congregation and ended suddenly.

The crowd rose with a rustle, women dragging their chattering babies, men adjusting their draperies. All were hurrying towards the steps of the porch where Mahatma Gandhi was trying to go up. But he was stopped by the surging crowd, specially by the women, who pushed their babies towards his feet, asking for his blessings, or perhaps asking him to heal some of their sick ones. We stood in the open. The moon came out from behind the clouds. The Jamia professors in their tightly buttoned coats and white Gandhi-caps were sharply outlined, the others in their draperies vaguely outlined. Thus perhaps is the fundamental difference between the Muslim and Hindu. Hinduism has a vague outline, so that it is difficult to say where it begins and where it ends, while Islam is sharply defined compact.

"Now, now, now ..." was saying Mahatma Gandhi to the women, "you don't mean that." "trying all the time to prevent those who embraced his knees from kissing his feet. At least so it seemed to me from where I was. He was amused, but also was perhaps scolding them for the incurable idolatry which abides in man's heart, strongest in that of the simple Hindu.

At this prayer meeting the crowd was of mixed faith. Before and after prayers the individuality of each stood out, dominated always by the vaguely defined Hindu and the sharply defined Muslim. But when the pandit sang, the audience were seated together, they seemed to have no longer any differences, not even to the eye. I say

"Let us eat together, sing together, and play together, but let us also pray together from time to time, it is the only time we lay down our arms against each other—strife really ceases when we pray .."

I wrote the foregoing after my visit to India in 1935.

In the lasting struggle between Good and Evil between Love and Hate, his spirit will be a telling force.

Bombay,  
11-10-1948.

#### SINCE 1934

##### *V. V. Gadgil*

I HAD seen Gandhiji on several occasions since he returned to India in 1915, but got an opportunity of speaking to him in 1933. In August that year, he was released after an eight days' fast in the jail. I too was released after spending 18 months in the Nasik Central Jail. Along with some other Congressmen I went to 'Parnakur' where Gandhiji was staying. He spoke to us as usual on the problems then facing the Congress. Someone then asked me whether I was attending some meetings where constructive work and other problems were to be discussed. I said I did not want to attend as I did not want to be a Mahatma. Thereupon Gandhiji asked me what I meant. I said "In the British Parliament there were Redmond brothers representing Ireland

One was all sweetness and reasonableness, the other was blunt. On one occasion both the brothers had participated in a debate, and the Prime Minister approached the younger one and said "Look here, what a fine gentleman is your brother" Immediately the younger Redmond said, "One gentleman is enough for Ireland." I think, therefore, that one Mahatma is quite enough for this great land." Prompt came the retort from Gandhiji: "Even one is too much." I felt crest-fallen, and in an apologetic manner said that one was absolutely necessary.

In May 1934 Gandhiji virtually suspended civil disobedience, and the A.I.C.C. at Patna decided that elections to the Central Assembly should be fought. I was then a prisoner in the Khosla Jail, where Shri Shankarrao Deo came to see me and told me that I must stand for the Central Assembly. I did not agree but kept an open mind. When sometime after my release in June 1934 I saw Gandhiji, he said "If you are a soldier, you must obey the General. You went to jail. Now you must go to the Assembly in the same spirit." I agreed. The opponent was one of the biggest industrialists and financiers of Bombay. During the Congress session in October 1934, I happened to meet Gandhiji on the exhibition grounds in Bombay. He asked me how I was faring. I told him that there was no difficulty about rural votes, but that the upper classes in cities might not vote for me, but that I expected some landslide there. He then asked me "What can I do for you?" I shall smilingly say "Pray for my success." He looked at me and nodded his head. When the news of my success reached him he wrote to me a letter in which he said that the news of success was coming from every quarter but that the news of my success he valued most.

In June 1934 Gandhiji visited Poona in the course of his Harjan tour. The Sanatanists in Poona kicked up a row against the public reception to be given to him. The Poona Municipality, after a good deal of agitation and bitterness, decided to present an address of welcome to him at 6-30 p.m. on 25th June. Every one of us was waiting in the hall. Suddenly a big sound was heard. People in the hall thought that it was part of the welcome programme. As I knew all the arrangements I suspected that something had gone wrong, and I came down. I immediately realised that a bomb was thrown on a car which exactly looked like Gandhiji's with the result that half a dozen were injured, one constable seriously. Immediately

the crowds were cleared. Steps were taken to prevent the news from going upstairs and creating pandemonium in the hall. Gandhiji came within a couple of minutes after the bomb explosion. When he saw the streets absolutely clear and the taking of extra precautions, he asked me what the matter was. I told him what had happened. I also told him that the bomb, which was meant for him, was thrown at a car which looked like his. It was only the delay which had occurred because of the gate at the railway crossing on the way being closed that saved him from a disaster. I took him upstairs. The whole programme went through, and Gandhiji was as usual cheerful and full of humour. He started auctioning the basket inviting people to bid more so that he could give me more commission. At the end he took me aside and asked me whether he would go back the same way, as he was anxious for the safety of the ladies in his party. I told him that no change was required, and took him and his party down below, put him in the car, and then informed the police who by that time had formed a ring round the whole building to start their enquiry. Later at night I went to Gandhiji's residence with a pilot car to escort him to the railway station, because he was to leave for Bombay by the midnight train. I took great precaution, changed the route and even changed the time, got him to the railway station, and asked him for a message for Maharashtra. "What message can I give to Maharashtra?" he asked. I was so much filled with shame at the event of that evening that I wished I had not asked for a message. But he then dictated a statement to be released to the press in which he stated that he pardoned the man who did this. It was foolish, he stated, and the man did not know how great harm he had done to himself and to his own religion. Throughout this incident, I could see his calm and his equanimity of mind, and above all a sense of proportion, which alone constitute greatness.

During the discussion on the Joint Parliamentary Committee Report in the Central Assembly I was one of the speakers on behalf of the Congress Party. Needless to say that my speech was very bitter, and certainly not one in which matters were mixed. Earlier on that very day Shri Bhulabhai Desai had also spoken. He was all sweetness and persuasion, mine was in sad contrast to his. But the popular enthusiasm was entirely expressed in my favour, and I was the recipient of congratulations from many of the members. Some days later a Karnatak leader

told me that Gandhiji very much appreciated my speech. When I asked him for the exact words of Gandhiji, I saw that my speech had not his entire approval, and that, according to him, this forum should be used with the dignity and consideration which it merited. I took the hint and thereafter all my speeches, though strong in sentiment, were moderate in language. This was noted by Gandhiji, and he said that I was proceeding on good lines. This only shows how keen he was about what Congress members said or did in the Assembly, and how much he cared for dignity and restraint in speech.

After partition was decided on, Delhi was busy with the formation of the new Cabinet. Although it was not unusual for me to occasionally go and attend prayers and see Gandhiji, while he was in Delhi, this time I scrupulously avoided him. It was only in October 1947, when he came to Delhi from Calcutta, that I saw him. He accosted me by saying "Now you have found time to see me!" I replied that he knew very well why I did not like to go, and he said he appreciated this. Several questions relating to the accommodation of refugees were discussed. He did not agree with my point of view because it was more legalistic. When once I told him that the needs of the State were greater than those of the individual, he stated that individuals made the State, and that hence it was my duty to look to their needs even if they conflicted with the needs of the State. While I could not at once agree to his general proposition, his arguments did influence me a good deal in my decisions thereafter.

On 2nd October, 1947, I went to Birla House and presented him with a cheque of Rs. 79. He looked at it and said "Why Rs. 79?" I said I knew that he would ask me such a question, and that my reply was ready. I said "This is only a symbolic figure, but the blank cheque is always with you, and you can fill it with whatever amount you think proper. All this is yours. You can always draw on it." I said "I will bear this in mind," said Gandhiji laughingly. My only regret is that he did not do anything further.

The last time I saw him was on the 18th of January, 1948. He asked me "What *parâkrām* (prowess) have you done in the South?" I told him that there was not much *parâkrām*, but I raised the question of his insistence on the payment of Rs. 55 crores to the Pakistan Government. He said that what the Government of India had done on

his advice was right from every point of view, and explained to me at great length the reasons, although he was weak and his voice was feeble.

New Delhi.  
30-11-1948

## LESSONS—BIG AND SMALL.

*Kasturba Haridas Gandhi*

WE were travelling in a third class railway compartment during Bapu's tour in the U P in 1929. Even in a moving train he used to attend to his correspondence or write for his weeklies *Young India* and *Nazimunnas*. It was about five o'clock in the evening. His watch was lying among the papers in front of him. I was sitting with a watch on my wrist just opposite to him. He asked me what the time was. I looked at my watch and told him it was five o'clock. He also saw my watch through his spectacles and noticed there was still one minute to five. Even looking at a watch for time was not a trivial thing for him. He would not do that in a cursory way. But in this case it was not lack of proper observation on my part. I had also noticed that there was one minute to five. Only I did not attach much value to that minute. He stopped writing and exclaimed "Is it five?" I replied with a guilty conscience "No, Bapu, it is one minute to five." "Well, Kanta," he said "what is the use of keeping a wrist watch? You have no value of time. Do you know how many days or months thirty crores of minutes would make? What a colossal waste of time it would mean for our poor country? It seems you have not even understood why I talk of the charkha. Again, you don't respect truth as you know it. Would it have cost more energy to say 'It is one minute to five,' than to say 'It is five o'clock'?" Thus he went on rebuking me for about fifteen to twenty minutes till it was time for his evening meals.

It was in Juhu, sometime in 1935, that the following incident took place. Bapu and party had planned to leave for Wardha by the evening train. I was one of the party. My maternal aunt had come down to Bombay from Nagkot for meeting me. We had not met for the past several

years. Bapu asked me after the morning prayer if I was accompanying him to Wardha that evening. He had thought I would like to stop for a day or two more in Bombay in order to have some time with my aunt. But I could not catch his purpose in asking me this question. Moreover, I myself did not think of my aunt and said: "Yes, I am going with you." After the prayer, at my aunt's request, I agreed to stay on for a couple of days more, and went to inform Bapu accordingly. He was in the bathroom. I announced to him the change of my decision across the closed doors.

He gave me the permission, but added: "Now listen. Why did I ask you after the morning prayer whether you were going with me or not? I knew your aunt would like to have some time with you. Could you not think of this before answering me that you were going with me to Wardha? And if you had thought about it, you should not now change your mind. Once you make up your mind you should carry out the resolve at any cost unless of course you feel that to do so would be a sin. Don't think I am scolding you. I tell you this for your future guidance. You can never achieve great things if you neglect this advice. You must cultivate the habit of sticking to your decisions and learning from your mistakes." "Yes Bapu, I understand what you say, and I shall." "No," Bapu at once interrupted, "You can stay on with your aunt. This is a matter now between you and her. But you can't serve people if you don't develop the habit of thinking well and acting with courage upon your decisions."

Once while going to Bombay from Poona Bapu asked the headmaster of a Bombay high school, who had come to see him at Kalyan, who was more intelligent among the two boys studying in his school and in whom Bapu was interested. The headmaster gave the name of one of them, whereupon Bapu enquired about the character of the two, and said: "Yes, character is more important in my view. We have no dearth of intelligent men among our educated classes, but we are very short of men with character."

It was sometime in 1935 just after the establishment of the All India Village Industries Association by the Congress. Whenever Bapu placed before the Congress any new scheme the work had to begin with his ashram. So village industries began with Mahatma at Wardha. Bapu called

Mahadevbhai, Kanubhai and myself, and entrusted to us the work of organising the grinding of flour which we required in the kitchen. At this time he used to look carefully into everything we did in Maganvadi. Once Kanubhai and I were cleaning vessels at a well. Bapu happened to pass that way and saw us pouring water profusely over a small vessel to wash it. He came to us and said: "Look here, Kanti, how much water you are wasting! Even now you don't know how to clean vessels." It was not that we did not know how to clean vessels. We had several lessons from the same guru at Sabarmati. It was our carelessness, or rather our inability to think of our actions in terms of millions of people. He continued, "How much water you are wasting!" "Well, Bapu, it is our energy that is spent in drawing more water, and in the well the water is inexhaustible," we argued. He gently said: "Quite right, but why do you forget that here we live for the service of others? Can you waste your energy like this? No, you must preserve it for the service of our country." Then he sat down and showed us how to clean vessels with a minimum quantity of water. As he went on cleaning another vessel he said: "See, take a small quantity of wet earth and rub all over the vessel; then pour plenty of dry earth in the vessel and clean the vessel dry; after this you don't require a large quantity of water to wash it. Now, will you do like this?" he said finally. We promised to do so thenceforth. But Bapu did not leave us until he saw that we could perform the operation well.

In Wardha I was one of his stenographers. He dictated to me letters which I took down in shorthand. Sometimes I could not hear a word here or a word there, but I filled the gap by looking at the context. Once I could not do so, and there were some bad mistakes. For this he rebuked me so severely for nearly an hour that I went to Mahadevbhai at night and told him with tears in my eyes that I did not want to stay with Bapu. Mahadevbhai tried to pacify me for a long time, and promised to speak to Bapu. Next day when he asked Bapu not to rebuke me so much for mistakes which even the professional typist, who was employed there, made. "Besides," he added, "now Kanti is more afraid and commits more mistakes! I have to correct a lot of them. So the purpose of your rebuke is not served."

Bapu said: "Mahadev, don't compare him to the typist employed by us. We pay the latter for his work, and

there the matter ends. It is not so with Kanti. I want to train him up. I can't tolerate any mistake in his work. He can sit very near me and ask me if he cannot follow me. He should be more vigilant in his work."

Only once did I see him losing his temper. It was at Sabarmati in 1936. The second bell at 4-20 in the morning had gone. The prayer had to begin. Bapu looked by his side. Lakshmi, the Harijan girl who stayed with us, was not present. He asked: "Where is Lakshmi? Has she got up?" "Yes," I said. The prayer could not begin unless Lakshmi came there. In those days Bapu used to make her sit by his side. We all sat silently for several minutes. At last Lakshmi came and took her seat by Bapu's side. Bapu inquired why she was late. The girl was of a very shy nature. She would not open her mouth. Bapu repeated the question several times. Each repetition was exhausting Bapu's patience. In the moonlight we were observing Bapu's face. Even the voice was getting firmer and stronger. But the girl wouldn't reply. Guilty conscience had aided her shyness to seal her lips. Bapu never knew defeat. After asking her half a dozen times why she was late, he got very angry when she did not reply. He lifted his hand in the attitude of giving a slap, but the hand did not come down. For me it was a surprise to see Bapu about to slap someone! Then, fortunately, the girl murmured that she was combing her hair. That was enough for Bapu. He swallowed all his anger. The prayer began. Soon after the prayer we went to our house. Bapu called Lakshmi and gently explained to her the need of removing her hair which came in the way of her attending the prayer in time. Lakshmi was too young to be given a chance to decide. A pair of scissors was sent for, and Lakshmi's hair was bobbed by Bapu himself!

This reminds me of another incident at Maganvadi, Wardha. I was late in the prayer. Of course the prayer did not wait for me. But I was asked by Bapu after the prayer why I was late. I said I was waiting to ease myself and the latrine was not vacant. In Maganvadi we had no brick-wall latrines. They were shifting superstructures made of bamboo-mat and placed over a small, narrow and long trench. Hearing my reply he said: "You could have dug out a small pit by hand somewhere in the field where the place was ploughed and eased yourself. After all, the night soil should not be uncovered and outside the field. It should be made into

manure. The darkness of the night dispenses with the need of any screening. We should use our common sense in all that we do. Don't do anything without thinking why you do it."

Bapu's hosts during his tour had always a hard task to look after his party which consisted of an assorted lot. Often we wouldn't go in time for meals. The kitchen would have to run all the day long. As if we were smaller "Bapas", some of us would have their idiosyncrasies in the matter of food. Some invalids also spoiled the party occasionally. Bapu could realise the difficulties of his hosts. So he saw to it that we gave the minimum of trouble to them. Once during his tour in the U.P. in 1929, we were guests of Rajasahib of Kalakanker. Several rooms were placed at our disposal. Even though our host had many servants Bapu went round all the rooms we had occupied, at the time of our departure. He was sorry to note in one of the rooms flowers, bits of paper, and the skin of oranges scattered here and there. He said with sorrow: "Look at this, Kanti, you have made this room look like a third class railway carriage." I promptly replied: "No, Bapu, I did not do it." He said: "Yes, I know you may not have thrown those skins of oranges there. But whosoever has done this belongs to our party, and we have all to share the blame." Then he asked me to take up the duty of inspecting our lodgings wherever we went, during the rest of the tour, before starting off for another place.

At Sabarmati when my younger brother, Rasik, and I were yet children, I remember Bapu taking us on his shoulder and throwing us into the trough in front of a well. Once during the rainy season the Sabarmati was in spate. We used to jump into the river at a ghat up the stream and would be carried by water to the ghat down the stream. Then we would walk along the bank back to the first ghat. Our house was just on the bank of the river between the two ghats. The path joining the two ghats passed through our compound. Bapu used to sit in the open verandah facing the path. One morning we, brothers, were performing our trips in swimming from one ghat to the other as usual. Rasik just called out, while passing across our compound. "Bapuji, come on with us to jump into the river, it is so pleasant to swim on the waves of the flood." It was just the time for Bapu's bath also. He left off writing, got up and said: "Come along, let us see who swims better. Don't think I am old."

(He was over fiftyfive then.) All the inmates of the Ashram who were staying along the bank came to know this and ran to have the unique sight of Bapu swimming in the flooded river. I had the good luck to witness a similar incident of Bapu's ride on a bicycle while going from the Ashram to the Gujarat Vidyapath in 1928. We had reached half way to the Vidyapath when Bapu asked one of the inmates of the Ashram, who was returning from the Ahmedabad city, to give him his cycle because it was getting late for him to reach the Vidyapath. He got on the bicycle and asked me to follow him slowly.

Once at Maganvada I was about to take a vow of eating only three things and only three, for a year or so. Ba came to know of this. She of course could not dissuade me. She therefore complained to Bapu about my proposed vow. He was walking after the evening meals on the terrace. He called me, and exchanged one of his 'sticks' for me. (Bapu often used to support himself on shoulders of two persons while having his walks. These were known as his 'sticks'.) Then he exclaimed "Kantilal, is Ba's complaint about you true?" I said: "Yes." "No, no," said Bapu, "you should not take such vows, and that too at this age. (I was about 25 then.) We in the ashram do not cook anything for our taste. Our food is quite *sattvika*, and meant for body-building. I don't want you to practise such asceticism now. You must have an ideal of eating well and then serving well. Do you know I used to take a dozen plantains, besides other things, in breakfast alone, and then used to walk 8 to 10 miles for my work, in South Africa? Don't take such vows. I may understand your doing such things when you are old but not now. All right, go, don't take such vows." There was no scope for argument. I had to obey him.

In January 1906 he went to the Gujarat Vidyapath Ahmedabad, to recuperate his health. The party included, besides Mahadevbhai and Ba, Kangu Garsin, Prabhavati Devi—Mrs. Jayaprakash Narayan—and myself. My birthday fell during this period. I made my obeisance to Bapu, Ba, and other elders and got their blessings. After the morning walk as I was massaging Bapu's feet with ghee as usual, I said to him: "Bapuji, half my life is over. When I look back across all these years I do not feel very happy, for I have rendered little service to anybody. I don't know what I shall be able to do in the coming years." Bapu said: "Oh, you think half of your life is over? No, no, I think only a quarter of it is

over. Why should you think it to be half?" "Is not India's average longevity much less than 50?" I asked. Bapu said, "It certainly does not apply to you! You should always expect to live as long as you can and serve."

Afterwards I went to the city for some work. When I came back to the Vidyaspathi rather late, Prabhavatsibehn served me my meals, and to my surprise there were two small sweet balls in the plate. It was almost impossible for us to have such delicacies while we were with Bapu. On my inquiry Prabhavatsibehn told me how Bapu had asked her to prepare those sweet balls from his own wheat flour and jaggery with a sprinkling of milk. It had been always a rare thing to have such indulgence from Bapu. Therefore whenever it came it was all the more welcome and was long remembered.

Mysore,  
27-9-1948

## DOCTOR AND TEACHER

*Kanu Narandas Gandhi*

**A**T Sevagram, in 1940, a Deccan girl of eighteen was suffering from typhoid. She had lost her mother in her early childhood. Besides a high temperature, she had a severe earache which often made her cry. Bapu visited her five or six times a day to comfort her, and advised her to repeat *Rāmanām*. She often groaned at night. Bapu sent someone who was sleeping near him to remind her of the holy name; and if the efforts of others failed to quiet her, he himself walked to her bedside and tried to convince her of the power of *Rāmanām* to soothe both the body and the mind. The girl's father naturally did not like Bapu to take so much trouble at the dead of night. But Bapu said "Is it easy to be a mother? I have often expressed my desire to be a mother, is it not?"

In Sevagram, seven years ago, Shrimati Durgabehn Desai had an attack of rheumatism. Bapu treated her according to nature cure methods. There was no remarkable improvement. On the contrary her condition took a turn for the worse. One day Bapu visited her after his usual morning walk. His daily massage, which lasted for nearly an hour, could not bring sleep to

him that day, and he asked me to terminate it soon. After the massage I asked why he could not sleep as usual. He replied: "How can I? I shudder at the thought of the pain Durga is suffering from. It is in my nature to think and worry about the patient under my care and try to find out the remedies to cure him or her soon. I am neither a *vali*ya nor a doctor. I merely utter God's name in full faith, and pour my heart and soul into the thought of the patient, and try to find out remedies for the ailment. God always helps me. He has never betrayed me as He seems to be doing today."

As an experiment Bapu had a septic tank fixed in his hut. He began to clean it with powder and a piece of cow-twine after its use on the first day. Observing this, his associates, Miss Amulasham and my wife, Abha, requested him to allow them to work in his stead. But he replied: "Just watch if I can do it or not. It won't take much of my time, and it is not laborious either. If everybody cleans the tank after use, the process will not take a minute, and it will always be clean and shining white." He then poured three jugs of water and made sure that no dirt remained anywhere in the tank. He then smilingly asked the observers to tell him if he did the job well or not.

"No doubt you did it well, but why should you do it at all? It will save your precious minute if we do it. Moreover it puts us to shame when we merely look on while you are doing it," said the ladies, requesting him to let them do this work for him in future. But Bapu said gravely: "It is true that I can save a minute. But how many more hours shall I have to spend in lecturing on cleanliness as a price of that minute? And yet the result will not be the same!"

This routine was invariably followed in Sevagram, and even today the tank is as clean and bright as it was on the first day.

Bapu was generally invited to attend the meetings of the Congress Working Committee held at Wardha. The meetings generally started at 1 p.m. and at times lasted for several hours. I remember a day when Bapu returned to Sevagram at night completely exhausted after prolonged discussions. He had not been able to spin that day before going to Wardha as he usually did. On his return he immediately asked for the spinning wheel. We requested him to give up the idea of spinning that night as

It would strain his eyes in the dim light of the kerosene lamp. But he said: "How can it be given up? I did not miss my supper." He again asked for the charkha and began to spin. While he was spinning one of us explained to him the cause of our hesitation in giving him the charkha: "Fatigue was so clearly written on your face that we dared not place the charkha before you." He said: "If I gave way to a feeling of fatigue or laziness, with what face can I ask others to perform their allotted tasks at all cost?"

"There was no question of laziness or shirking of a duty. Only it would have been better for your health if you had gone to bed as you were so much tired."

"It is true, I am tired; but if I slept without performing this *yajna*, my conscience would prick me all night and would not allow me to have sound sleep."

Since then, he always carried his charkha with him when he went to attend the Working Committee meeting, and did his spinning when he got time, even while the meeting was going on.

During his twentyone days' fast at the Agakhan Palace in 1943, he had a small boil in the ear which pained him terribly. Even the Government doctors felt that he would have to be released for an operation. The Government sent an ear-specialist, and he too seemed worried. His medicine, tried for two days, had no effect whatsoever. Bapu asked permission to try his own medicine which the doctor gave quite reluctantly. Bapu then gave instructions to Dr. Gilder and Dr. Sushila Nayyar about the preparation of the medicine and used it the same day. Within two days he was completely cured, and could sleep well. The doctor came next day and with his torchlight attempted in vain to trace the boil!

"Why do you unnecessarily bother yourself, doctor? The boil has disappeared with the pain," said Bapu with a smile. The doctor, in sheer astonishment, inquired, "What is the marvellous drug that has cured you in no time?"

"You will laugh when you hear the name," said Bapu, again with a banter.

The doctor said: "I must know the drug which worked a miracle. We must keep in touch with new discoveries in medical science."

Bapu said "The credit goes to Ba and Durga. I know of this medicine since long, but might not have remembered it today. I was reminded of it from their conversation. It is thus. Til oil was first heated with garlic in it, and was put in the ear when it was bearably hot. A heated brick was placed near the ear so that externally as well as internally fomentation for a long time could be ensured. This is our domestic medicine. And what did it cost? Hardly two paise. Is it not marvellous?"

The doctor was amazed. Shaking the head in acquiescence, he said: "Right, it has worked a miracle, no doubt. I confess my failure."

"Then give up your degrees and take to our home-made medicines," said Bapu. The other doctors too could not restrain their laughter.

Bombay,  
15-8-1948

## MY GRANDFATHER

*Sumitra Ramdas Gandhi*

I WAS about five years old when Bapu came and stayed in a building near Mahilashram at Wardha. Our house too was near by. My eyes had been a source of anxiety to my parents and grandparents since my early childhood. I had beautiful curls on my head, and it was a difficult task for my mother to tidy them and comb them. I was a naughty child, and used to play recklessly, dishevelled my neat curls. They spread on my face and eyes. I looked through the locks, and that weakened my eyes still further. This added to my parents' worry. I did not like the idea of cutting my hair, and opposed the proposal whenever it was made. Then Bapu played a trick with me.

During the Diwali festival that followed, Mother prepared a number of sweets and sent them through me to all her friends. The day after the Diwali is our Gujarat New Year Day. As is customary for youngsters to pay their respects to the elders and receive their blessings, I went to Bapu. After making an obeisance to him I boasted to him that I had distributed sweets to all our friends.

Bapuji said with a twinkle in the eye: "But you did not give me any!" I was nonplussed. Presently, however, I gathered courage and replied: "Yes, I forgot to do so earlier, but I will bring some now for you." He cunningly said: "No, now it is too late. Now I won't take sweets; I will ask for something else from you!" I asked him: "What do you want?" He said: "Do you promise to give me whatever I ask for?" How could I imagine what he had in mind? I therefore said: "Yes, certainly!" He said: "Then give me your hair!" For a while I was shocked and became speechless, but gradually I calmed down and replied: "Well, you may have it, but on the condition that you yourself must cut it. I won't allow anyone else to touch it." He agreed and there and then asked Kanubhai to get him a clipper. He cleaned the machine, and closely cropped my hair. I felt like weeping, but restrained myself. Then I went to my mother and narrated the whole incident to her. Later I often got my hair cropped or bobbed, but never regretted it. Older persons admired me for it, and remarked: "She is a clever child, for she has caught Bapuji to do this job for her!"

Later, when I was eleven, I had to undergo an eye operation, and was asked by the doctor to give complete rest to the eyes for one whole year. During that period I accompanied Bapuji and Ba (my grandmother) to the Congress session at Haripura in February, 1938. We stayed in a special tent put up for Bapuji. At night I slept near him. One morning he asked me to bring his chappals. I put them on and brought them to him. He immediately told me that children should not put on the chappals or shoes of elders and that they should bring these in their hands. He then asked me to take back the chappals to their original place and to bring them again in the proper manner.

In 1942-43 when Bapuji and my grandmother (whom we children addressed as 'Motiba') were in detention in the Agakhan palace, my grandmother was ill, and during one of the visits to her I accompanied my father, as grandmother loved to hear children's talk and laughter. My mother gave me two handkerchiefs daily for use at school, but to me they seemed more of an encumbrance. But in Poona, for the sake of dignity, I took care to have one of these with me whenever I went out. The day on which I went to see my grandparents was Monday, i.e. Bapuji's day of silence. We started from our place at 10 a.m., and reached the Agakhan palace at 2 p.m., after paying a few

visits on the way. By this time my kerchief got crumpled and soiled. I was indifferent about it; nor had I another to replace it. But it did not escape Bapuji's notice and by his facial expression he showed his disapprobation of my dirty handkerchief. He asked me to get it washed. When I said that I had not got another with me and that I badly needed it, he gave me another kerchief, and I washed the offending one. Next day the kerchief I had left behind was returned to me with the remark. "Now your kerchief is clean."

In July 1945 I was staying at Samla with my uncle and aunt, when Bapuji came there for the conference convened by the Viceroys. We, children, joined him in his daily prayers and walks. Once while talking in Gujarati I used an English word 'education' about which he reprimanded me. He said nothing to me directly, but turning to his secretary nonchalantly asked him: "What does Sumi mean? Is it a horse or a bull?" I am unable to follow her. Do you know the meaning of the English word she used?" I realized my mistake and corrected it. After that, whenever I was at a loss to find an appropriate Gujarati expression, I apologised to him, and he gave me the correct word. What he disliked was a hodge-podge of words, and he was keen on our using the correct words in the language which we for the moment were using. He also corrected the mistakes in our letters and pointed these out to us.

He never liked my studying in a college, and said it was a showy type of education, and that it was not related to practical life. As, however, I was obstinate he had to give in. When I went to him after my first year examination, he minutely inquired into my hostel life and studies at college. He wanted girls to be as sturdy and bold as boys. During his 21 days' fast at the Agakhan palace in March 1943 I travelled alone from Wardha to Poona; and when I saw him and bowed to him he had no strength to speak, but he smiled and gave me a thump on the back in appreciation of my pluck and courage.

Banaras.

16-9-1948

## SINCE MY STUDENT DAYS

V. V. Giri

I HAD the great pleasure and privilege of meeting Gandhiji in England early in my life when I was hardly twenty (i.e. in August 1914). He had come to England on his way back to India from South Africa. I met him at his residence at Talbot Road in London. I remember the jubilation and the pride with which he was met by all Indians and the esteem in which he was held by some of the statesmen of Britain. I still remember what the Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Asquith, the then Prime Minister, wrote in reply to our invitation to him to be present at Hotel Cecil where all Indians gave Gandhiji a rousing reception. He said that, if a great personage like Gandhiji were an Englishman, he would have held the biggest position in the history of England, and he expressed the hope that on his return to India Gandhiji would be able to play a great part in the history of his country.

England had entered the War two days before Gandhiji arrived in London. He started the Royal Army Medical Corps for rendering help to the sick and wounded in various hospitals, and he wanted every young Indian to join the same. I was, and am still, a believer in nature-cure methods, and one day when I went to him we discussed this matter. He told me that he was pleased to find one who believed in those methods and subsequently asked me to join the Medical Corps as an officer. I was at first hesitant to do so, because at that time we believed that England's difficulties were our opportunities. But he was so persistent that I could not very well say 'no', and my young age and my respect for him were the only excuses. But when I returned home that evening I felt a prick of conscience, and having searched my heart I felt that I should stick to the original proposition that under no circumstances should England be helped in that war. At that time many of us believed in the cult of violence and we felt that there was no other go but to have recourse to an armed revolution in order to attain independence. Many of the Indian students in England were of that view and were prepared to make all sacrifices in that direction. So I wrote a letter to Gandhiji apologising to him for having given him a promise and then withdrawing it.

explaining my views in the matter, but telling him at the same time that I was no coward, that I would not mind even the publication of my views, and that I was prepared to take all the risks involved in such publication. He appreciated my views and did not press me to join the Corps.

After my return to India I was connected throughout my public career with the organization of labour. He was affectionate enough to take note of my work. In the year 1928 when there was a big lock-out at Kharagpur involving 12,000 workers of the Bengal Nagpur Railway, his inspiration and guidance were of the greatest help, which resulted in the workers' triumphing over the Government of India and ultimately winning success for the cause of the retrenched workers for whom the Bengal Nagpur Railway Indian Labour Union fought under my guidance. At one time it looked as if the lock-out would be broken. But Gandhiji's advice by telegram to the workers had an instantaneous effect, and during the three months of the lock-out the workers kept to the resolve of sticking to non-violence as their weapon. Their unity and their sacrifices, combined with the advice of Gandhiji, secured for them full wages for the three months of the lock-out, concessions and reinstatement of retrenched workers. Similarly when the tin-plate workers in Tata-nagar were on strike his advice was of the greatest value.

I had the privilege of going to the second Round Table Conference on behalf of the industrial workers of India. In fact when I was invited to the first Round Table Conference by the Rt. Hon'ble Mr. MacDonald, the then Prime Minister of England, I refused to do so on the ground that I could not go to that Conference unless Gandhiji decided to attend it. Gandhiji was good enough on several occasions to ask my opinion at the second Round Table Conference in matters relating to the future of the industrial workers in our country.

When I left the Prakasham Ministry in 1946 and when a suggestion was made to me that I should consider the proposal of accepting the office of the High Commissioner for India in Ceylon, it was Mahatmaji who particularly desired my taking up this post, because he said that he had grown a pessimist in the matter of the settlement of Indo-Ceylon problems, and that if I took it up he would take a more optimistic attitude in the settlement of the dispute.

Thousands in Ceylon—men, women and children—took part in the immersion of his sacred ashes at five different places in the island. The Ceylonese, without distinction of caste, colour or creed, felt that Gandhiji represented all that was best in the East.

Colombo,  
28-9-1948.

## AT SEVAGRAM

*Gopi Gurbar Garbaram*

**M**y wife, Vinakaram, and I reached Sevagram on 8th February 1945. Bapa had invited us to Sevagram in spite of the misgivings expressed by some of his associates at the ashram. "But I differed from them," he said to us a little later, "because I knew that a change of ideas could take place in your case as it did in mine, for I too helped the Government in the first World War." The misgivings, I must say, were natural, because I had been till then the Honorary War Propaganda Officer attached to the National War Front at Simla. But I had been disgusted with that work, having seen how our own people were made to suffer. In his first letter to me dated 10th October 1944 Bapa wrote to me: "Imitate whatever in my life commends itself to you."

Our first act on being admitted to the ashram was to substitute khadi apparel for our foreign clothes. We then participated by and by in the various activities of the ashram, such as cleaning latrines, cutting vegetables, cooking, spinning and carding. Bapa once said to us: "I have bigger things in mind for you, and want you to have training in every department so that you can, like me, make sanitation, food and other arrangements not for hundreds but thousands. I have looked after such arrangements for 6,000 persons. Not that you will work alone; you will no doubt have others to help you, but you will be the guiding spirits and take work from them."

Once we asked him what attitude one should adopt towards Western civilization. His reply was to this effect. "Forget the terms East and West, and consider all things on their merits." "I have never been against Western civilization," he went on to say. "In fact we

should never think in terms of 'Eastern' and 'Western', but should pick up good things wherever they are found. Take my own example. I have learnt so much from the West. I was partly educated there. Ruskin and Tolstoy, whose writings made such a deep impression on my life and thought, both belonged to the West. If I were against Western things because they were Western, how could I have liked Tolstoy, Ruskin and the Bible?"

He then related how, in his young age, a copy of the Bible was once left with him by a friend. On reading it he felt bored and fell asleep. Later on, however, he came to appreciate the Bible.

Wondering how this could happen, I asked him "Did you get any guidance in sleep?"

"Not at all," he replied. "I was just a student then, and knew nothing about 'guidance'. I was only a matriculate when I left for England. I saw Bombay then for the first time. I had once been to Ahmedabad to appear at the matriculation examination. Otherwise I had remained in Kathawad all the time, and had roamed about in the villages in a bullock cart. As I was the son of a Dewan, people fed me on the way with jowar roti and curds, and at times they paid me an eight anna piece. When I remember those days my mouth begins to water even now." He gave a hearty laugh as he said this.

Here are a few extracts from the diary I kept in those days:

10-3-45

Every day I give a question to Bapu, and he returns it to me with his reply in writing (in Hindustani). The question and answer today were as follows:

Q.—What is soul force? How is it related to satyagraha?

A.—Soul force is the force of the spirit that dwells in the body. Satyagraha is impossible without it. Therefore soul force has a very vital relation to satyagraha.

15-3-45

Q.—What is the object of the Congress? Who can be called a Congressman?

A.—The object of the Congress is to achieve Swaraj through truth and non-violence. Therefore one who makes the fullest contribution to the effort to achieve the object is a Congressman, and not one who dissimulates by merely paying four annas.

16-3-45:

Q.—What is fate? What is the relation between fate and human endeavour?

A.—Fate is the fruition of our own past deeds. Fate may be good or evil. To wipe out or minimize the evil effects of fate requires human endeavour. There is a constant war between fate and endeavour. Who can say which of the two really wins? Therefore one should go on making endeavour and leave the result to God.

17-3-45

On my telling Bapu that my wife had conceived and on my asking him to advise her about the preparation for motherhood, he said to her: "There is nothing to worry about. You should not feel ashamed. You can exercise restraint even at this stage. Lustful people indulge their passion even after conception, which is not only unnecessary but is positively harmful. I myself did so, and I did not exercise restraint when I was young. But we ought to think of the coming creature as a sacred thing. I had written to Dattu and was thinking of sending you alone, but I will now send you both together, and you need have no anxiety on that score." Then he added: "If you like, you can come here for delivery. We have got good doctors and good arrangements. Only a few days back a lady here gave birth to a baby, and she is taken good care of. You should eat fruit. I get a lot of them, and you should take them from me."

18-3-45:

In the course of our talk today he said to us: "As you are both dear to me I want you to go away from this place to escape the heat here. You may go to Samla. I shall give you a letter to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Get into touch with her, and do some work there. People like you can be useful wherever they go. Afterwards you can come here, if I am alive; or even if I am not, do come. This is your home, and you are always welcome here. Do write to me regularly and keep me informed of your activities, and I shall write to you."

Curiously enough, our sanitation batch this morning consisted of three well-educated young men. I was a Ph. D. Shri Deo Prakash is an M.A., and Shri Krishna Chandra is an M.Sc. The director in charge of this section took us to a road where Bapu has his morning walk. There were certain cracks on the road which we were asked

to fill up. After we did this job to the satisfaction of the director, we were asked to dig trenches in a field for latrines. Here we had one more companion, Prof. Rama Chandra Rao, who professes to be an atheist. One day Bapu asked him if there was any change in his opinion after living in the ashram for such a long time. But the professor still held firmly to his disbelief. I may as well mention here that I had only two khadi suits. I therefore put on my foreign silken clothes when I did the sanitation work, and khadi clothes for the rest of the day. I learnt here for the first time how to wash clothes without much trouble. It was part of the new education we were having.

In the evening we heard a story, which was going round, that Bapu had in the daytime said to an old ashramite: "Now you are like a lion, and you are free to go elsewhere as you seem to be keen on going, but when you become as meek as a lamb, and feel like coming back, you will always have a welcome here." Later we learnt that the co-worker had dropped the idea of leaving the ashram.

Q.—How can there be a philosophical revolution? What is Gandhian philosophy?

A.—I cannot point out the cause. Only I see that a revolution is taking place. The cause may presumably be this: that philosophy is dry knowledge, and that non-violence alone sanctifies the knowledge. Is there a 'Gandhian philosophy'?

23-3-45

A letter was given to me last night by Shri Aryanayakam, which contained some adverse remarks against me and a warning to Bapu. This morning I broached the subject, when he said: "Such letters make no impression on me. I told Aryanayakam either to tear off the letter or pass it on to you. It is all foolish. In what way can anyone deceive me? And if one does deceive me, he or she is the loser, and not I. You do not know that even doctors and murderers have come to me here. I am not concerned with what they have done in the past, so long as they don't repeat the performances here." I said: "Bapu, I won't call — a liar, but obviously he is misinformed." Bapu: "That's it. He must be misinformed. I have seen him. He is a good man. Have you seen him?" "Yes, once," I replied. Then I proposed to give my reply to Bapu in writing. He said: "That is a good idea. But

don't import any anger into the writing. Make a deliberate effort to avoid it," I undertook to carry out his instructions.

24-3-45.

Nowadays Bapu often closes his eyes while walking, but walks at his usual speed, with his hands on two persons walking with him on two sides. He begins his silence about the time he starts for the walk, and during the walk hears what other people have to tell him, even though his own eyes are closed. He opens his eyes when we arrive at the main gate on our way back. Today he expressed his delight on being told that my duty nowadays consisted of digging trenches in the field.

25-3-45.

In the morning when I met him he referred to the letter which I had given him the day before as a reply to the letter of —, and said: "I have corrected the letter, as I found it was full of violence." I said: "Bapuji, I am still a fresher in your school of non-violence, but I will make the letter milder and non-violent if you so desire." He said: "You are quite young. I have made the necessary changes, and will give it to you later in the day."

Q.—What is prayer, and how can it be fruitful and effective?

A.—Prayer must come from within. It can be effective only when it rises from the innermost depths of the heart. But those who offer prayers for the sake of the fruit thereof, do not know what prayer is.

26-3-45.

I met Dr. Syed Mahmud, who is on a visit to Retagaram, and in the course of our talk asked him how he had met Bapu for the first time. He replied with a smile: "I saw Gandhiji for the first time in London in 1903, in an English suit and a top hat. A party was given to a friend who had completed his education in England, and I was invited to it. Gandhiji too was there. When he was asked to speak he got up and said: 'Why do you give him a party? What has he done? He has merely completed his studies. Let him go to South Africa and work there.' That was the tone of his speech even in those days. The next time I saw him at Kanpur in 1916 in the simple dress of a peasant. The first thought that came to me was that he had become so poor. I pitied his lot, and thought of taking out some guineas from my

pocket to give him! That was my second impression of him. The third time I met him was in Bihar in 1917 when on his way to Champaran, he stayed as a guest with my father-in-law, the late Muzhar-ul-Haque Sahab. The fourth time I met him was in 1921. The Ali Brothers had asked me to suspend my practice at the Bar, but I refused to do so and said: "Why do you want me to suspend my practice? I will give you money, if you want it." But I had to give in when Gandhiji asked me to suspend the practice, saying: "We want you and not your money." (As it was said by St. Paul: "I seek not your's but you!"—2 Cor 12, 14.) "After that," Dr Mahmud added, "I have been in intimate contact with him. I resumed my practice in 1925 with his permission, and left it finally in 1930, after which I have never practiced."

Today my question to Bapu and his reply were as under:

Q.—What is your opinion about us (i.e. about my wife and me)? How much of national service would you expect us to render? How can we qualify ourselves for national service?

A.—I would expect you to go the whole hog. But it all depends on how much faith you have in my activities. This covers the method of qualifying yourselves for the service.

27-3-45.

Our time for departure from the ashram is drawing near. We have decided to go to Samla, as the heat at Wardha is growing unbearable, particularly for my wife. Referring to this Bapu said: "Why should you miss me at all? I shall be always with you in spirit. I would have taken you with me, but Vinoba will be alone, and she needs you now, and you should be with her. We have a large field for work even at Samla. You will have ample scope for national service even there. Rajkumari is of course there to guide you."

Q.—How can a historian serve the country, and how can he write the "Progressive History of India"?

A.—He can serve the country by writing a true and authentic history. He will show progress where there has been real progress, and will show retrogression where he finds it.

28-3-45:

I was young and had not yet forgotten my student days. So I said to him "Now we are going to Simla. What about the testimonial which, you had told us in the beginning, you would give us?" He smiled and said. "Did I say that? I must have referred to your work itself, because your work is your testimonial. You both have learnt so much here. No work should look small to you. You must always put forth your best effort in whatever you undertake to do. You should know how once when Stevenson was first employed, he cleared the room of his master by taking all things out and clearing every nook and corner of the room and then putting back the things in a very neat and nice way. His master was fully satisfied. This is how he elevated himself through work. His work was his testimonial. You both should work so well that your superiors may be fully satisfied with you and your work."

"Follow the principles of truth, ahimsa, and selfless service," he went on to say. As for truth he said. "I used to say before God is truth; but I now say truth is God. Where there is truth, there is knowledge; and where there is true knowledge, there is always bliss. Thus all our activities should be directed by nothing but a love of truth." As for ahimsa he said. "It should be practiced in our daily life. Even your letters should not contain words which constitute violence. Without ahimsa it is not possible to attain truth. The two are thus intimately related to each other. Ahimsa is the means, truth the end." As for service he said. "We should render service in a selfless manner. As prayer offered with a view to getting its fruit is not real prayer, service is real only when there is no selfish motive behind it. You have learnt here cooking, latrine-cleaning, spinning, carding, etc. Now use the knowledge for the good of others. Utilize your skill in organizing huge gatherings, just as I have done. You should be the guiding spirit, and should organize the whole show."

Bikaner,  
27-9-1948.

## M. K. GANDHI

### *Lord Halifax*

I SHALL always be thankful for the opportunity of knowing and being, I hope, a friend of Mr. Gandhi. Since the tragedy of his assassination so much has been spoken and written of the qualities in him that seemed to the particular observer to be pre-eminent, that every country of the world has become to a great extent familar with this most remarkable human figure. And as with all great men different aspects stand out for different people. That which gave him his exceptional position in India was something different from that which won for him the admiration of friends in Western Countries, which is another way of saying that the man himself was larger than any of the attempts made to paint his portrait.

There was a directness about him which was singularly winning. But this could be accompanied by a subtlety of intellectual process which could sometimes be disconcerting. For to appreciate what was passing in his mind it was necessary, if not to start from the same point, at least to understand very clearly what was the starting point for him. And this was nearly always very human and very simple.

I remember when I first went to India talking about him to C. F. Andrews, who I imagine was closer to him than any other Britisher. He said, as indeed was very clear when it came to the Round Table Conference, that Mr. Gandhi cared little for constitutions and constitutional forms. What he was concerned with was the human problem of how the Indian poor lived. Constitutional reform was important and necessary for the development of India's personality and self-respect, but what really mattered were the things that affected the daily lives of the millions of his fellow countrymen—salt, opium, cottage industries and the like.

I have no doubt this was true, and though it was easy to smile at the devotion of Mr. Gandhi to the spinning wheel, while Congress was largely dependent for its funds upon the generosity of wealthy Indian millowners, the wheel nonetheless stood for something very fundamental in his philosophy of life.

He was the natural Knight-errant, fighting always the battle of the weak against suffering and what he judged injustice. The rights of Indians in South Africa, the treatment of Indian labourers in the indigo fields in India, the thousands rendered homeless by the floods of Orissa, and above everything the suffering arising from communal hatreds—all these were in turn a battlefield on which he fought with all his strength for the cause of humanity and right.

As I look back upon the talks that I had with him in Delhi in the spring of 1931, two conversations stand out in my recollection. They have always seemed to me a better interpretation of his mind and method than anything else, as showing the way that idealist and realist could meet.

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The first related to his demand, as part of the arrangement to be made on the cessation of Civil Disobedience, for an enquiry into the actions of the Police over the last twelve months. I resisted this on various grounds, pointing out to him among other arguments that I had no doubt the Police, like everybody else, had made mistakes but that it was quite futile to attempt twelve months later to get accurate information of what might have passed in some local brawl or minor riot. All that we should achieve would be to exacerbate tempers on both sides. This did not satisfy him at all, and we argued the point for two or three days. Finally, I said that I would tell him the main reason why I could not give him what he wanted. I had no guarantee that he might not start Civil Disobedience again one of these days, and if and when he did, I wanted the Police to have their tanks up and not down. Whereupon his face lit up and he said: "Ah, now Your Excellency treats me like General Smuts treated me in South Africa. You do not deny that I have an equitable claim, but you advance unanswerable reasons from the point of view of Government why you cannot meet it. I drop the demand."

The other incident was of the same date, and illustrates, if I was correctly informed, both the quality of Mr Gandhi's courage, and sense of honour. After we had made our so-called Irwin-Gandhi Pact, he came to me the next morning and said that he wished to talk about another matter. He was just going off to the meeting of the Congress at Karachi, which he hoped would ratify our agreement, and he wished to appeal for the life of a



young man called Bhagat Singh who had been recently condemned to death for various terrorist crimes. He was himself opposed to capital punishment, but that was not now in debate. If the young man was hung, said Mr. Gandhi, there was a likelihood that he would become a national martyr and the general atmosphere would be seriously prejudiced. I told him that while I quite appreciated his feeling in the matter, I also was not concerned with the merits or demerits of capital punishment, since my only duty was to work the law as I understood it. On that basis, I could not conceive anyone who had more thoroughly deserved capital punishment than Bhagat Singh. Moreover, Mr. Gandhi's plea for him was made at a particularly unfortunate moment. For it so happened that on the previous evening I had received his appeal for a reprieve which I had felt bound to reject, and he was accordingly due to be hung on Saturday morning (the day of our conversation being, if I remember rightly, Thursday). Mr. Gandhi would be getting to Karachi for the meeting of Congress in the afternoon or evening of Saturday after the news would have come through, and the coincidence of date from his point of view could therefore hardly be more difficult.

Mr. Gandhi said that he greatly feared unless I could do something about it that the effect would be to destroy our pact.

I said that it would be clear to him there were only three possible courses. The first was to do nothing and let the execution proceed, the second was to change the order and grant Bhagat Singh a reprieve. The third was to hold up any decision till after the Congress meeting was well over. I told him that I thought he would agree that it was impossible for me from my point of view to grant him his reprieve, and that merely to postpone decision and encourage people to think that there was such a chance of remission was not straightforward or honest. The first course alone, therefore, was possible in spite of all its attendant difficulties. Mr. Gandhi thought for a moment, and then said: "Would Your Excellency see any objection to my saying that I pleaded for the young man's life?" I said that I saw none, if he would also add that from my point of view he did not see what other course I could have taken. He thought for a moment, then finally agreed, and on that basis went off to Karachi. There it happened much as anticipated the news had come through many of the crowd were in highly-emotional

state, and I was told afterward that he was quite roughly received. But when he had opportunity he spoke in the sense agreed between us.

The two episodes that I have quoted will suffice to show on the personal side what reason I had to value his friendship, and I can think of no person whose undertaking to respect a confidence I should ever have been more ready to take than his.

Measured by our standards the abrupt cutting short of such a life is immeasurable disaster for the country that he loved. But those who know best what he achieved, and what he might still have achieved in life, will pray that an even richer harvest of understanding may be the fruit of death that closed a life devoted as was his to service and so willingly surrendered.

Yock,  
September 1948.

## IN LONDON AND DELHI

*John Haynes Holmes*

**I** FIRST heard of Gandhi in 1922—more than a quarter of a century ago. I had at that time never heard his name, but found it by chance in a magazine article which told the story of his achievements in South Africa. From the moment I read this epic tale, Gandhi became the hero of my life, the saviour of my soul. I proclaimed him, in a sermon which unexpectedly went to India and beyond, "the greatest man in the world". How abundantly was my faith vindicated in all that the Mahatma did and said in the crowning glory of his career!

Of course, I got into touch with Gandhi. Thus, I wrote him letters—very presumptuous on my part, it now seems. But Gandhi responded, and I became his friend and follower. Soon I was receiving and reading the weekly copies of *Young India*. How excited I was when the chapters of his autobiography began to appear in the columns of this paper. I at once called Gandhi, asking if I might have the rights to publish this work in the pages of a weekly paper, called *Unity*, which I was editing at that time. He agreed at once, and the autobiography was thus printed in full here in America. I later secured its

publication in an abbreviated form as a single volume edited by C. F. Andrews. The publisher argued that Gandhi was not well enough known in this country to justify the printing of the original text of so extended a work. Now there is a spate of volumes about the Mahatma, and among them is the autobiography in full.

All this while I was close to Gandhi, but had never seen him. It happened, by mere chance, that I was in Europe in the summer of 1931, which will be remembered as the year of the Indian Round Table Conferences in London. Picking up a German newspaper one day I read, to my vast astonishment and delight, that Gandhi was on his way to attend the Conference. Instantly I abandoned all my plans of travel on the continent, and hastened to England. I could not miss this unexpected opportunity to meet one whom I had so long revered. There, in England, I met Charlie Andrews and Reginald Reynolds, and together we went to Folkestone to meet the distinguished traveller from India. It was a cold, foggy, rainy September day—typical English weather in the fall. I can remember shivering as I stood on the pier—partly from the chill which penetrated my bones, and partly from sheer nervousness at the prospect of at last coming face to face with the great Indian, my friend.

The Channel boat was delayed by the fog. But suddenly we saw her nose peering through the heavy curtain of mist and rain. At last she was made fast to her moorings, the gang-way was down, and I was the first aboard. As I entered the cabin I saw Gandhi sitting cross-legged on his bunk. Instantly he arose to greet me, and held me in his embrace. Then, as his first word, he said: "Why didn't you meet me at Marseilles?"—the port where he had disembarked to cross the continent by train. He laughed with eager merriment as I tried to explain that I felt I had no right to intrude upon him unduly. "You should have come," he said. "Then we could have talked."

But the tram for London was waiting, so we must hurry. I remember my consternation as I watched Gandhi going out unclad, as it seemed to me, into the cold and wet of one of the worst days I had ever seen in England. He wore only a ken cloth, a cotton shawl over his shoulders, and leather sandals on his bare feet. Someone, as solicitous as I, had raised an umbrella over his uncovered head. I trod behind him as we made our way from boat to tram and thought how grotesque he looked. This was

a very different figure from that presented centuries before by Julius Caesar and William of Normandy, when they landed on these shores to conquer England. But here was a greater and nobler conqueror, destined for mightier deeds. Yes, how little did I know that, in less than sixteen years, India would be free and Gandhi's victory won!

On arriving in London we went at once to the Friends Meeting House, where a good audience had gathered to receive the distinguished visitor. Then there was the long drive out to the East End, to Kingsley Hall, where Gandhi was going to stay, as the guest of Muriel Lester, during his attendance on the Round Table.

With this there began a week when I was with Gandhi at intervals each day. Certain memories stick right out! Thus there was the bright, sunny Sunday morning when I talked alone with Gandhi on the terrace of Kingsley Hall. I recall how he enjoyed the warm sun, and how happy he seemed to be. Later on, I spent a late afternoon with him on the same terrace as he ate his frugal but nourishing supper. Then there is the Sunday evening when a group of us, including tenement mothers from the neighbourhood, gathered about the Mahatma while he talked to us about prayer as an exercise of the spiritual life. I think also of our meeting in St James's Palace, where the Round Table sessions were being held, when we discussed pro and con the question of his coming to America. It was after this discussion that Gandhi took me in his automobile for the long ride out to Kingsley Hall. There were other occasions when I saw him. I shall tell them in detail some day. But all too soon there came my sailing date for America, and I had to say good-bye.

As I look back upon this week in London, I am amazed that I saw so much of the Mahatma, and came so close to him. Here was one of the busiest men in the world. Upon him lay the burden of India in her quest for national independence. Here in England he was attending the daily sessions of a conference of momentous significance. In this conference he was grappling with the world's greatest empire and therewith was challenged to make decisions, interpret policies, and offer leadership which affected the fate of millions of human beings. Gandhi sat at the centre of the council table. He was pressed upon from every side—there was no incident or instant which was free of responsibility. Yet he seemed to find

it easy to meet and talk with this unimportant clergyman from America, and to show him a hospitality which seemed to spring from a heart which had not a care in the world. A part of the explanation lies in Gandhi's humility, his utter lack of pretension or pose. He had no need of spending time to maintain his dignity or parade his importance. He was as simple as a child, and thus free to do what he would. Along with these qualities, of course, went an affection, a love of people, a concern for courtesy and kindness, which made him accessible to all who would know his spirit and walk in his way. In all that week in London, there was not a moment of hurry, not a trace of impatience. On the contrary, there was a constant serenity and calm, a sweetness of temper, an unquenchable good humour, which made him the most attractive and lovable of men. In all that seething city, with its noise, confusion, and hurrying crowds, there was at least one man who, in Matthew Arnold's phrase, was "self-possessed and independent still".

Years passed, and I could reach Gandhi only by letters. The correspondence continued at long intervals. I had a feeling that I had no right to bother the Mahatma with frequent communications. I must write only when I had something definite to say. He always answered my letters, sometimes by his own hand, sometimes by dictation to a secretary. I hoped that I might see him again, but this seemed more and more unlikely as time went. The war imposed a kind of final veto upon Gandhi's travelling west, or my travelling east. Then came to me, right out of a clear sky, the invitation of the Watsonsall Foundation to go to India on a lecture-trip to the schools and colleges. I accepted at once—and wrote joyfully to Gandhi of what had happened. I shall never forget his reply—the precious letter in which he wrote:

"You have given me not only exciting but welcome news. The news appears to be almost too good to be true, and I am not going to believe it in its entirety unless you are physically in India."

I left America for India on September 18, 1947, and arrived in Bombay after ten days in England, on Sunday, October 5th. On the Saturday following I addressed an enormous mass-meeting at Chowpatty beach in celebration of Gandhi's birthday. On the following day, I went to New Delhi and there met the Mahatma twice. The first time was on the very day of my arrival in the capital.

To my astonishment and delight, I learned that he had already arranged an appointment in anticipation of my coming, and I must go round at once to Bala House, to see him.

I was ushered promptly into his presence—in the little room where he was tragically fated to die within a few weeks. He seemed to be troubled by a bronchial cough, and was wrapped in a cotton shawl, high about his neck. This fell away as we talked, and I saw his chest and arms. I was amazed at what seemed to be his superb physical condition. His skin was like a baby's, his muscles firm and stout. I told him that he looked better than when I saw him last in London, seventeen years before, and was pleased to be told that he was ten pounds heavier than he had been at that time. We talked easily and informally together. I did not press him on the great and distressing events of the hour. Of course I expressed my deep sympathy over the disorder, violence and bloodshed which had been raging in the land, and could see how great was the grief in his own heart. But he was not overcome. His courage was as great as ever. And he trusted still in God. It was an amazing experience to see this man whose single influence was bringing peace again to his stricken land, and all so quiet and simple. Here was the pure spirit, burning as a clear flame upon an altar, to shed light in darkness.

The night of this first day I went to the six o'clock prayer-meeting in the garden. The thought came to me, as I saw no police or soldiery in the place, that assassination would be easy. But surely there could be no violence in this lovely place and on this sacred occasion. Nor would Gandhi seek the protection of arms. The hundreds of persons present were all worshippers, of different races, religions, and languages, but one in the spirit of the Mahatma. Their reverence was a beautiful thing to see.

I saw Gandhi a second time at the end of the week. I was leaving for South India, and then for a long trip eastward to Calcutta. I confidently expected to return, and see Gandhi for one last, long communion of mind and heart. So this was just a good-bye and to me a kind of benediction. Gandhi was tired that afternoon—he received me without appointment, and to the interruption, I fear, of important work. But he was never more gentle and kind, and his conversation was full of vigour. But I did not stay long. As I rose to go, he told me that I must surely see him again. I promised to come back, if my

schedule permitted. But, alas, I never saw him again, but had to content myself with a long letter of farewell, written from Calcutta.

I had a leisurely journey, flying the vast stretches of the Pacific Ocean. I stopped a few days in Tokyo, a week in Honolulu, five days in Los Angeles, then by train across the continent to New York. I went promptly to my study, to take up the work which had long been awaiting my return. And there, right on top of my great accumulation of mail, was a long letter from Gandhiji, placed there reverently by my secretary, that this might be my welcome home.

A few days later—the assassination! And the greatest chapter of my life was closed.

New York,  
1-10-1948.

## MAHATMA GANDHI, MY HOST

*Karel Huger*

**I**T was during my stay in Ahmedabad, at the home of a friend on the bank of the Sabarmati river, that I first followed the footsteps of the Great Soul of our age, Mahatma Gandhi. Directly across the river from the window of my friend's home, I would see the simple cottages of Gandhi's well-known original Sabarmati Ashram, which formerly for some sixteen years was a beehive of activity. On a number of occasions I meditated in the now silenced space of this old ashram ground facing the smoke-stacks of the imposing Ahmedabad spinning mills—the Manchester of India. From a suggestive account of C. F. Andrews, I could visualise this most auspicious and appropriate setting of Sabarmati Ashram. In view of the teeming spinning mills, the frail-looking ascetic must have appeared as David against Goliath when he started the manual spinning of khaddar on his little charkha. The powerful western-minded and shrewd manufacturers apparently smiled condescendingly, yet Gandhi's thin khaddar thread of the virtue of manual labour meant much more than a mere resistance to the dangerous aspects of sweeping industrialisation. Gandhi's charkha, which started gently humming in the Sabarmati Ashram,

was indeed a grotesque counterpart of Ahmedabad's huge spinning mills, yet ultimately it was this charkha that found its place on the national flag of independent India, representing after all the only accessible tool of 90 per cent of India's village population. The dream and plan of the Indian village as a basic social laboratory was apparently conceived in this Sabarmati Ashram—my first indirect approach to Mahatma Gandhi.

After this preparatory experience my first actual meeting with Gandhi occurred in Delhi. Even though the formal reason of my journey to India was the study of ancient Hindu astronomy, deep in my heart was an earnest longing to meet the great representative of India. The opportunity arose rather unexpectedly on one January day in 1935 when an invitation was extended to me to attend a meeting of the members of the Congress Party in the hospitable palatial residence of the late Dr. Ansari, Gandhi's devoted Muslim friend. The morning of Ansari's work and home at Delhi is another great story in the winding trail toward India's freedom. It was therefore not accidental that also on that particular afternoon under Ansari's roof there were present all principal leaders of the Indian National Congress, including the honoured guest from Turkey, Madame Halide Edib Hanum, leader of modern Turkish womanhood. There it was that I learned that Gandhi was in the vicinity of Delhi.

The ever-present universal minister of India and "Mother of the Nation", Madame Sarojini Naidu, must have guessed my pious desire to meet Gandhi. At the close of the meeting she asked me or rather directed me in her eloquent commanding voice: "Undoubtedly you wish to take part in the evening prayer with Mahatmas, and so you will go with us!" Indeed, it was a most unbelievable blessing on this first visit to be introduced to the spiritual leader of India in the distinguished company of such devoted friends of Gandhi as Sarojini Naidu, Halide Edib Hanum and Madame Hilla Rustomy Faridouni, who was then president of the All India Women's Conference. We arrived at the grounds of Gandhi's camp shortly after sunset when the communal evening prayer was to begin. I have no memory of details of the camp as my mind was centered on the little cabin which was the Mahatma's shelter.

The most inspiring moment of my life will ever be that first sight of the Mahatma of India. Squatted on the

ground, close to his numerous Harijans, there was the retiring, spiritual giant in his radiant simplicity, disarming friendliness and childlike unselfishness. In the apparent physical frailness there was so little of him, yet one could but feel an overwhelming power of the streaming torrent of a morally disciplined man, a spiritually matured and free sannyasi, a seer of ages. That instant is unforgettable. It occurred to me that if nothing else were accomplished, my pilgrimage in India had reached its fulfilment. Gandhi's kindly attitude immediately made me understand the meaningful, endearing appellation Bapuji, little father, which we all loved to use in his ashram. Of his first utterances at that meeting, I recall those in regard to the message I then conveyed to Bapuji from Romain Rolland whom I had visited in Villeneuve, Switzerland, prior to my departure for India. Long before that time Romain Rolland, a free citizen of Europe, as I might call him, recognized in Gandhi his spiritual kinship and thus was perhaps the first to write a remarkable biography of the guru of contemporary India. There was further conversation but, after all, in the company of a great soul questions dwindle in significance. Besides Gandhi was not a talker. You just perceive and feel the power of silent eloquence. I only recall seeing him spinning on his charkha, as he always did on later occasions when I was fortunate to stay in his ashram at Wardha. During my first presence at the evening prayer with the Mahatma, I believe the sky was the most wonderful, the heavens the most mysterious that could ever be revealed to me. I was pleased to learn that he knew and enjoyed some of the popular works of my first teacher of astronomy, Camille Flammarion of France, who had impressed him some years before.

In Gandhi's personality there was something utterly guileless and charming disarming any opposition, yet it cannot be completely perceived by sight, nor by intellect, but by the heart and soul. "Do not worry if you look ugly," said he on one occasion to a depressed woman with a deformed face, "if you are truthful you are beautiful." This was perhaps the greatest testimony of his devotion to the doctrine of satyagraha. I was captured by the simplicity of this man's life, a culmination of democracy which is not boastful and does not propagandize. This interesting statement of Gandhi persists in returning to my mind: "Theft is anything in my having that someone else needs more than I do." Yet the world may wonder

why he reduced his possessions to a loam cloth. At one regular prayer gathering a visiting guest, interested in Hindu mysticism and yoga philosophy, asked Gandhi for recommendation of an accomplished master in the practice of yoga, preferably one living in the Himalayan mountains. Bapuji smilingly retorted: "Himalayas are everywhere, and your master is every suffering man and woman." It was indeed significant advice to those who seek to escape the fateful consequences of western civilization. "I want to be born again and again on this earth so long as there are suffering people who need help." Gandhi sought privileges neither here nor in the hereafter. As he remarked, "The realization of Truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in the limitless ocean of life."

At Wardha Ashram each day brought new and revealing light on Bapuji's inexhaustible source of simple wisdom. I was most deeply grateful for every moment possible to be in the close company of Bapu, as during those inspiring walks, during the period of his spinning when he would interview an endless chain of callers, and last but not least, during the two daily meals. And what a blessing to have been able to sit at the feet of the master during his Monday period of silence! Daily, during the modest meal at eleven in the forenoon and five in the afternoon I was honoured by his generous invitation to sit always at his side, while Rajkumar Amrit Kaur, then also visiting Gandhiji, sat on the opposite side of our charming and cheerful host.

Those daily brisk walks at the time of approaching evening meditations, the chanting from the Bhagvad-gita, and the period of prayer in particular provided the most blessed communion which returns to my memory as a heavenly feast of the soul. Problems of the most complex nature melted in Bapuji's mind. In the hand of the redeemed sinner, they were converted into very simple codes of guidance. Once when I was asked to give an astronomical talk on our wonderful universe, he said to me: "Put it so that every child could understand." I think of this advice when occasionally I hear a handful of specialists in the field of atomic physics, who become intoxicated by their language in which they estrange themselves from humanity. Once during meal-time a young man somewhat annoyed by the swarm of flies of the post-monsoon crop, exclaimed: "Why on earth were these flies created?" "In order to teach us," said Bapuji.

who had overheard his complaint. On another occasion we were discussing how far we should go in the practice of ahimsa, non-violence. A member of the group gave a very challenging inquiry, addressed to Gandhi. He said: "Suppose you are in a safe position, with a firearm convenient, and you observe an entirely hopeless criminal stealthily approaching a friendly group of people with intention to kill without mercy in order to pursue his plan. Under such circumstances, with an entirely anti-social criminal, are you justified in shooting him, if in the last moment there is no other way open to save the lives of the group of peaceful people?" Gandhi's firm and unhesitating answer was what I consider the most descriptive of his life's philosophy: "No, you have no right to shoot, not even that criminal, but throw your body in his way in an attempt to awaken the stone of his heart."

Bapu, dear little father, was never a gloomy or stern ascetic, as he might have been pictured, but a kindly friend of all. From his cheerful behaviour, one was never aware of the severe discipline he had voluntarily imposed upon himself, yet he was most considerate of others. How much concerned he was in my numerous excruciating sore spots developed from mosquito bites, so violent in the first wave of the monsoon season! Then, when we both were invited to a dinner by Jemmalal Bajaj, Bapu smilingly commented: "I live too luxuriously to partake of such a dinner." Daily I saw his very simple meal, and yet even that small portion on his plate he would share, for with his wooden spoon he would place on my dish a small amount of green paste, a better vegetable relish, which was apparently a substantial part of his meal. Gandhiji never ate rice in all the days I stayed with him at Wardha.

It all appears as a dream in this age, in our civilization of super-force and prospects of atomic frenzy. Yet that dream became a reality, and I am grateful for this grace of God, Mahatma! A great seer has passed this way and something of him will ever remain with us. All tyrants, dictators, and politicians, no matter how glorious in this age, will fall into utter oblivion, but the Mahatma's memory will grow with the lapse of time. Here was a man who could have had all wealth but chose the road of his Mahatma children of God.

Few people are aware of his critical attitude toward political freedom, with which his life is so closely associated. Today political freedom ceases to be an asset

Being a connotation of the greed for power and based on an ocean of human blood, it becomes a liability and grows to be a paganism and the curse of our age. "I cannot give freedom, people have to grow up to it," his weak voice calls out into the tumult of this world which is abounding in large and small tyrants and dictators, while all of them use the enticing words "freedom" and "liberation".

In Gandhi's companionship I realized that boundless spiritual beauty which lifts the soul above this world. The Mahatma represents a majestic example and a guiding light in this age of materialism, when once again the East must reassert its ancient position of spiritual guidance while the West is submerged in the endless battle-fields of chronic, serial world wars. I often observed those various delegations from distant corners of the vast sub-continent of India calling on Gandhi. In fact, I could vision delegations from the entire world seeking the Mahatma's counsel and guidance toward entirely new foundations of a harmonious, forgiving and tolerant society.

Once, at the noon meal, while Miraben, barefooted, approached Bapuji's seat, I could not resist the mysterious overwhelming awareness of participation in a spiritual feast in Christ's companionship. For the path of the Great Soul of India is the path of a seer of ages. Above the blood-stained freedom of integrated selfishness, sometimes described as a nation, the Mahatma's road leads toward something more than liberation, toward that ancient and ageless wisdom, the victory of the spirit over the body. In our age we have no choice, for as John Haynes Holmes has stated, it is Gandhi or the atomic bomb. On my trail towards world citizenship, my most blessed and inspiring experience will ever be my fellowship with the Mahatma of India. Now when all his mortal remains are carried away by the waters of the ancient sacred river, I repeatedly reread the lines of his last letter to me received shortly before he passed away. Witnessing the world as it is today, I read as a prayer Bapuji's last direct guidance to me in his closing words "I am the same as when you saw me except that my faith burns if possible brighter than before." And I close in Bapuji's beloved song: "Lead Kindly Light, Lead Thou me on."

Chattanooga,  
1-11-1948

## BAPU

*Samaritayan Jesudason*

**I**T was in January 1928 that I had my first interview with Bapu in his room at the Sabarmati Ashram where some of us had met for the conference of the International Fellowship. He made inquiries about our Christukula Ashram at Tirupattur, and told me how he would like to spend a longer time with me to get a more detailed account of the Ashram and its work. During the discussion at one of the sessions of the conference, quite innocently I addressed him as 'Mahatma'. I still remember how upset he was "at this Mahatmachap that was being conferred on" him! I saw that he always preferred to be addressed as 'Bapu' by those who loved him.

He visited our Ashram on 18th February, 1934, in the course of his Marjan tour in the south. He was to arrive in the afternoon. But long before that crowds had begun to assemble on the large open air lawn in front of the Ashram house of prayer, in spite of the hot mid-day sun. As I welcomed him at the entrance gate he patted me on my hands in his usual loving way, exclaiming, "After all! After all!" Miss Muriel Lester too arrived there on that same day directly from Calcutta after an interview with Sir John Anderson, the then Governor of Bengal. While taking his meals Bapu heard from her, privately, a report of the interview.

In the meanwhile the crowd had increased. As we were walking towards the improvised platform from where he was to speak, I said to him, "Bapu, a lady in the audience wishes to give you a gold necklace for the Bihar Earthquake Fund. Would you like her to give it to you before you speak or after that?" He replied, "Ask her to give it before I speak, as it might stimulate me to speak with greater enthusiasm!" But a moment later he said: "No, let her give it at the end of my talk as then she might be moved to give away more of her jewellery!"

As we went up to the platform he sat down, and I stood by his side to interpret his speech into Tamil. He sat quiet for a while without beginning his talk. I asked him, "Bapu, are you not going to speak?" At once he replied, "What nonsense! Don't you first say some-

thing to introduce me to the audience?" I remonstrated: "Hapu, do you need an introduction?" He laughed in that quiet, attractive manner so characteristic of him, and said: "I am pulling your leg!" It was this spirit of gentle good humour even at times when he was so tired, as he was that evening after a very busy day spent in a long journey and many meetings, that struck those who came close to him. I remember how on one occasion, when someone made an uncomplimentary remark about him in the course of a discussion, his very sharp but humorous short reply threw the whole audience into a merry peal of laughter.

It was after 1934 that my contact with him became more intimate. He invited me to become a member of the Managing Committee of the Hindustani Talimi (Basic Education) Sangh in 1937. That gave me the opportunity for an annual pilgrimage to Sevagram. At every interview he would inquire as to how our Ashram and its work were getting on. Once when I told him about our difficulties in getting a sufficient number of suitable workers, he replied that we would never get a satisfactory response until the whole present-day system of university education underwent a revolutionary change.

I can never forget his deep interest in our Ashram, because my heart is deeply moved by the fact that the very last words I heard him say to me at Birla House, Delhi, just nine days before he was assassinated, were: "How is your work getting on? How is your Ashram?" Wonderful indeed was his memory for humble workers like me in far-off rural centres and for work carried on in the remotest corners of India.

On this last occasion I had gone to Delhi, along with two others, to report to him the proceedings of the All India Pacifists' Congress held at Hosangabad in January 1948. He was to have presided over it, but could not do so owing to his fast. As he talked to us he was particularly interested in what I had to say about a Muslim speaker who had spoken at the Congress on communal peace and amity. When I told him that the Muslim friend quoted more from the Bhagavadgita than from the Quran, he burst out laughing and said: "Well, that is exactly what Mooney accuses me of—i.e. of being more a Christian than a Hindu in my teaching on ahimsa! The Muslim friend ought to have quoted more from the Quran!"

On a previous occasion he told me that ahimsa required a double faith—faith in God, and also faith in man, without this double faith a man would not be able to practise ahimsa.

At the public meeting at Tirupattur held soon after Bapu's death, over which I was asked to preside, the most moving speech was that of the Secretary of the local Muslim League, who said "Mahatma Gandhi was the twentieth century Christ, and he died for us Muslims."

Tirupattur,  
27-9-1948

## IV. THE EARLIER YEARS

*D. B. Kalhekar*

IT was December, 1915. The Congress was holding its annual session in Bombay. Bapu, accompanied by his ashramites, was putting up at the Marwadi Vidyalaya. I was staying elsewhere, but I spent a great deal of time with Bapu. One day he had to go somewhere, and he started putting away the things on his desk most methodically and carefully. Then I saw that he was searching for something. "What are you looking for, Bapu?" I asked.

"My pencil. 'Tis a tiny pencil!"

I wanted to save both his time and his trouble, so I took out a pencil from my pocket and offered it to him. But he would not have it. "No, no!" he said, "I must have my own little pencil." "But take this one now!" I urged. "I'll find your little pencil and keep it here. Your time is being wasted." Bapu said, "You don't understand. I simply mustn't lose that little pencil! Do you know it was given to me in Madras by Natesan's little boy? He brought it for me with such love! I can't bear to lose it."

So we hunted and hunted for that naughty little pencil, and at last we tracked it to its lair, and Bapu was happy. It was hardly a couple of inches in length! I began drawing a picture in my mind of the little boy who had so lovingly given that little pencil to him.

In 1929 I once invited Sardar Vallabhbhai to the Gujarat Vidyapath to lecture to the students. As he talked to them of various matters a reminescent mood came upon him, and he took up his reminiscences as the subject of his speech. He said—

"After my return from England I occupied myself at Ahmedabad, with my practice and the earning of money. I used to study the politics of this country, but I saw no leader who was capable of helping us to attain our goal. All our leaders were readers with the tongue than with action, so they failed to interest me. I spent my evenings in the Gujarat Club. If some speaker turned up to lecture to us, I enjoyed poking fun at him. One day Gandhiji came to our Club. I had read about him, of course. I listened to his lecture with my usual scoffing indifference. But at last I realized that this man was not a mere wind-bag—he was out for action. So I became interested in him, and made it a point to meet him whenever I could. I wasn't concerned with his principles, or with *Ahimsa* (violence) and *ahimsa* (non-violence). All that mattered to me was that the man was sincere, that he had dedicated his whole life and all he had to the cause he served, that he was being consumed with a desire to free his country from bondage, and that he knew his job thoroughly. I wanted nothing more.

"We started the 'no tax' campaign in the Kheda District. From that day to this my services have been placed at the disposal of Gandhiji, and I have known no other master. People sneer at me as a 'blind follower', but I don't care! When I accepted his leadership I was perfectly aware that following him would be no joke—that a time might come when people would spit in my face, and I would have to endure it without one word of complaint. I have never regretted my action. Gandhiji leads the way, and I just follow with full faith and trust in his wisdom."

In 1927 Bapu was touring South India, working for khadi. The Tamilnad tour had ended, and we were travelling about in Andhra by car. We reached Chikakol at about 10 p.m. and found that the local workers had organized a spinning competition between the best women spinners there in Bapu's honour (Chikakol khadi is famous throughout the length and breadth of India for its remarkable fineness and beauty). We were dead tired with ceaseless travelling in motor cars, and were in

no mood for any programmes or competitions. Mahadev and I thought, "Bapu can't avoid attending this competition, but why should we? It will make no difference to anybody whether we go there or not. Much better we snatch a little sleep when we can." So Mahadev and I went to bed and were fast asleep. Bapu's bed had been prepared for him—we never knew when he came or how he slept. We rose at 4 a.m. for prayers. We washed our faces and were just beginning the prayer when Bapu asked: "Did you say your prayers before sleeping last night?" I replied: "I was so tired when I went to bed that I just went off to sleep, clean forgetting my prayers! I've only remembered that now, when you asked us about it." Mahadev said: "It was the same with me. But just as I was dropping off I remembered that we hadn't prayed, so I sat up in the bed and rectified the omission. I didn't wake Kaka, though."

Then Bapu said with indescribable pathos: "I sat for an hour or so in the competition and when I returned I was so tired that I, too, forgot all about prayers and went off to sleep. Then, at about two o'clock, I woke up, and it rushed upon me that I hadn't said my nightly prayers! It was such agony that my body was seized with a fit of trembling, and I became all wet with perspiration. I sat up in bed, and was plunged in a remorse beyond all description. How could I forget Him by whose mercy I live and who strengthens me in all my efforts? How could I forget that Bhagavan? I could not get over my own carelessness. I could not sleep a wink after that! All night I have sat up in bed, repenting my mistake, and begging His forgiveness."

He fell silent, and it may be imagined with what feelings we said our morning prayers that day! Mahadev-bhai sang a *bhajan*. Then Bapu said: "Even while travelling we must have a fixed time for our evening prayers. We make a mistake in leaving our prayers till we have finished all our work and are preparing to go to bed. From today we pray punctually at seven o'clock in the evening, no matter where we may happen to be."

We were still journeying by car. Every evening at seven o'clock we would stop the car, and, wherever we were—whether in a forest or in a town—we would say our prayers without fail at the time appointed.

Just as Bapu had to deal with problems of national importance, so also did he have to deal with the private and domestic problems of his countless friends and

co-workers. There was a young man, belonging to a family which was known to Bapu, who had just become engaged. But no sooner were his fiancée's people able to congratulate themselves on having settled their girl in life, than he started making a fuss and saying, "I don't want to marry this girl!" People rallied around and tried to plead with him, to persuade him, but the groom refused to budge. Finally exhausted and despairing, the bride-to-be's people came to Bapu to beg him to see what he could do. They were very diffident because they realized how valuable the time and energy of such a great man must be, but necessarily knows neither law nor manners. Bapu sent for that boy and talked and talked and talked with him. The girl's people sat there listening to the conversation. For three days consecutively did Bapu wear himself out trying to talk sense into that young man; and the young man's prospective in-laws sat watching and listening, and, presumably, drawing their own conclusions. On the third day some work took me to Bapu. The boy was talking loudly about his sorrows and difficulties. "My father," he was complaining, "wants me to work five whole hours daily in his shop! I ask you, Bapu, is it possible for a modern young man to work for more than a couple of hours a day? Oh, how can I tell you how worried I am!" Bapu listened to all this with unruffled tranquillity, and, finally, somehow or other succeeded in wringing from that boy a promise that he would go on with the marriage. The girl's people heaved long sighs of relief. But Bapu's face suddenly clouded over, and he became very grave. He sent the boy out of the room and turned to the girl's people. "You have seen this boy at close quarters for three whole days," he said. "You have seen with what difficulty I got him to consent to this marriage. And now I ask you in all earnestness—do you still desire to give your girl to this man?" I was watching the leader of the girl's party. He seemed to be quite dazed and bewildered; he could say neither yes nor nay. And Bapu kept his piercing gaze fixed upon him. One could see a confusion of thoughts racing in the man's mind. At last having weighed the pros and cons, the man made up his mind. "Mabstman," he said brokenly, "you are quite right. We are no longer eager—" Bapu immediately called the boy in and said, "I don't want to lay a burden upon you. I have talked to these people. You are freed from your engagement. You may go."

The boy departed. The girl's party rose to go. Bapu turned to me and, without giving me a chance to state my business, said "Kaka, I have done a bit of cow-protection today! When I talk of cow-protection, it is not only of four-legged cows that I think. God alone knows what we were letting that poor girl in for! A great and very blessed work has been done today." Having said this, he gave his undivided attention to my work. But the expression of deep content lingered long upon his countenance.

Shri Mahadev Desai told me this story himself. He was travelling in Northern India with Bapu. Bapu was used to writing in trains, of course, but Mahadevthas was adept in that art. One day he had so much to write that he began in the evening and kept steadily at it till the early hours of the morning. He finished his work and then slept that morning. He simply could not get up at the usual time. When he awoke, he saw all the paraphernalia of morning tea spread out before him. Bapu had gone to the station waiting-room himself, and ordered tea, milk, sugar, bread and butter to be brought to the compartment for Mahadev! He never drank tea himself, but he knew that Mahadev could not do without it. So he made all the preparations himself, and then sat patiently waiting for Mahadev to get up. The latter got up eventually, saw what Bapu had done, and felt very embarrassed indeed—especially so because he realised that Bapu knew all about his weakness for tea. Bapu, seeing his embarrassment, started talking sweetly of this and that, and soon put him completely at ease.

Wardha,  
15-11-1948

## GANDHIJI AND ANDHRA

*A. Kalidhara Rao*

**I**T was, early in 1919 that I first came into contact with Gandhiji when he visited Berwada (now Vijayavada) and put up with me during his all-India satyagraha campaign against the Rowlatt Act. He was then unwell and had to sit in a cushioned chair while speaking to a large audience. I had the privilege of translating his English speech sentence by sentence, in Telugu. I signed the satyagraha pledge, and accepted his leadership. But

I had no opportunity to offer satyagraha, as he called off the movement on 18th April owing to disturbances in some parts of the country, particularly the Punjab.

In the last week of August 1920, he visited Berwada again along with Maulana Shaukat Ali on his way to the special session of the Congress to be held at Calcutta in September. His health was much better then, and he wore a white khaddar cap which became afterwards very famous as the Gandhi cap. I again acted as his host, and in the largely attended public meeting held in the evening he adumbrated his non-violent non-cooperation programme beginning with the giving up of titles and boycott of legislatures, and ending with civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes. Before the public meeting was held, all the prominent Congressmen of Andhra met him and had a prolonged discussion with him. After the discussion was over, Gandhiji asked me to give up my candidature for the Madras Legislative Council. I hesitated and said that I would do so if the special Congress passed a resolution adopting the boycott of legislatures. He said: "If you are convinced that it is right, you should withdraw irrespective of what the Congress will decide." I then agreed; and my friend, Jagardar Gulam Mohiudeen Sahib, agreed to resign his honorary first class magistrateship. Gandhiji made both the announcements at the public meeting. At Calcutta, most of the Andhra delegates were among the supporters of Gandhiji.

The first meeting of the All India Congress Committee under the new Congress constitution (adopted at Nagpur) was to be held in March 1921. As a member of the A.I.C.C. I pestered Gandhiji and the Congress President, Shri C. Vijayaraghavachari, with telegrams, and succeeded in getting them to decide to hold it at Berwada on 31st March and 1st April. Almost all the Congress leaders then living attended that historic meeting. Several bhajan parties came to Berwada from all directions, walking from long distances and causing a great awakening in the villages on the way. More than three lakhs of people gathered from Andhra for the meeting. Gandhiji got his constructive programme (known as 'the Berwada programme') adopted by the A.I.C.C. The tricolour flag was also adopted at the meeting. Andhra Khaddar soon became very famous.

The arrangements of our reception committee could not cope with the huge gathering—there were no loud

speakers in those days. It had been announced that Gandhiji would address a meeting, along with other leaders, on the big meadows on the evening of the second day, as he had done the previous evening and also that very day in the morning. But he was very busy at the Committee, and I did not feel like disturbing him. So he did not go to the public meeting. But Shrimati Kasturba and Shri Devadas Gandhi, expecting Gandhiji to be there as originally announced, brought his food to the meeting and waited there. I knew nothing about this. Only at 7 p.m. did they come to know of the change in his programme. Gandhiji would not take his evening meal after sunset. So he left Bezwada that night by train without food. It was due to my own inadvertence that this mishap took place. I fell at his feet and begged for forgiveness for the sin I had committed. He raised me with his loving touch and told me in a most affectionate manner, "Never mind, Kaleswara Rao, you did nothing knowingly. I am accustomed to fasts." That soothed me to some extent.

In 1936 I wrote to Pandit Malaviya, and at the same time to Gandhiji, to get admission at the Banaras Hindu University for a Harijan student, V. Kurmayya, who had lived in my house at Bezwada and had completed his study at the high school which we managed. Gandhiji instructed me to send the boy to Malaviya. This was the first instance of a Harijan student seeking admission to the Hindu University. Malaviya hesitated to admit him, as the Principal was afraid that other Hindu boys might boycott the institution if this Harijan boy was admitted. But Gandhiji insisted, and Kurmayya was admitted but was kept in segregation for some time. Gandhiji, when he came to know this, got this invidious distinction removed. Kurmayya was taken into the hostel and all Brahmin and non-Brahmin boys not only treated him as an equal but even dined with him without compunction. Many more Harijan students were admitted afterwards. Kurmayya studied there for some years and got the B.A. and LL.B. degrees. He is now an M.L.A. and was for some time a Minister in the Government of Madras.

In 1929 when Gandhiji visited Bezwada he expressed a desire to discuss certain matters with me in private. So we two drove in a car to a village near Vuyyar. There he told me that elections to the legislatures would, it was

feared, be attended with a lot of corruption, and he quoted a famous American case. I replied: "When we get Swaraj legislative elections will be inevitable, and if the Congress sets up candidates, corruption will be much less." Anyhow he advised me that I should retire from parliamentary work and take to purely constructive work, and resign my seat in the Legislative Council and my municipal chairmanship. I promised to consider his suggestion and decide. I regret that I did not resign and take up the cross and follow him implicitly. He had felt that no useful purpose was served by Congressmen continuing in the central and provincial legislatures. We had entered the legislatures in 1926 as the Opposition. During that conversation he cut a joke, saying that Andhra had too many leaders. I retorted, in the same jocular spirit, that we were very democratic, and that though every district had a respectable leader of its own, we decided things by consultation among us. I added that we were not in the habit of driving away old leaders as soon as younger leaders came to the fore, as happened in Tamil Nad, for instance! He heartily laughed and said: "Yes, Tamil Nad and Andhra!"

Later in the same year, when Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Congress President and the leader of the Congress Party in the Central Legislature, gave a notice of a resolution which he wished to move in the A. I. C. C. at Allahabad calling upon Congressmen to resign their seats in the legislatures, Biju Satyamurti, Karam Shanker Roy, J. M. Sengupta, I and some other legislators waited on Gandhiji as a deputation at Allahabad, and requested him to postpone the consideration of the resolution till the Congress session which was to be held at Lahore in December that year. Gandhiji got it postponed in deference to our wishes. In the Lahore Congress resolutions on complete independence and boycott of legislatures were passed, and we resigned our seats early in January 1930.

When he was about to sail for England for the second Round Table Conference in August 1931, I, as the General Secretary of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee presented to him a memorandum in support of a separate Andhra Province, and requested him to get us the Andhra Province. Dr. Pattabhi also was present. Gandhiji said: "If I succeed in my mission to get Swaraj, I shall certainly bring you the Andhra Province!"

In October 1933 I and my friend Shri M. Rapineedu saw Gandhiji at Wardha and had long talks with him, or

three successive days,<sup>1</sup> about civil disobedience and Harijan work, at the end of which we issued a statement with his approval.

In July 1937 Rajaji formed his Ministry in Madras, and I was made the Chief Parliamentary Secretary and Chief Whip. I got a letter from Shri Mahadev Desai, written under instructions from Gandhiji, that I should attend specially to the grievances of Harijans and get them redressed, as Rajaji might be too busy with other things.

On the 7th of April 1942 I went to Sevagram to see Bapu. He had returned from Delhi only a few days back, after a talk with Sir Stafford Cripps. I did not find him in his usually cheerful and jocular mood. Something seemed to weigh heavily on his mind. When I asked him for instructions he merely asked me to read his articles in *Harijan* and act accordingly.

On 8th May 1942 I received at Berwada a telegram from him saying that Mirabehn would halt at Berwada on the 10th on her way to Cuttack, and that I should receive her. Immediately on arrival she had a confidential talk with me for more than an hour. She told me that Bapu's inner voice was incessantly spurring him to launch a satyagraha movement immediately, as it had done before the Dandi march in 1930. He was going through an inner struggle for some days continuously, and had grown very weak physically, though his face was shining with additional spiritual lustre. His inner voice was also telling him "Gandhi! Get up. Launch the movement. You will succeed in the end. But you will have to go through darkness and woods, mud and thorns, and will have to undergo great sufferings and difficulties before you succeed." Mirabehn told me that Bapu finally made up his mind to launch the 'Quit India' movement, and obtained peace of mind. She showed me a typed copy of the first article on 'Quit India' which was to be published in *Harijan* on the 17th of that month, and told me that there was the possibility of the paper being banned and Bapu being arrested. She said that Bapu wanted her to tell me all this and ascertain my attitude personally and that of the Congressmen in Andhra through me. She added that, even if Bapu was arrested early, we should all carry on the fight. I unhesitatingly

1. A full report of Bapu's conversation with me is found in "Conversations of Gandhiji" by Swami Sachidananda Sarathi (Pillai & Co., Madras) 1950, pp. 7.

replied: "Not only I but all Congressmen in Andhra will follow Bapu, in case he is compelled to give a fight now to British imperialism." I then asked her, "What about Rajaji?" She said: "You know Bapu would not bother himself as to what others do according to their own light. Let us leave Rajaji to himself. Let us work under Bapu's leadership." I said, "Certainly. We will follow Bapu." In the evening she spoke in general terms on the subject to a meeting of Congress workers asking them to be ready in case Bapu launched a struggle.

On 8th August I was arrested while in sick-bed at my village Nandigama and was released in June 1943 as I was seriously ill. I wrote a letter to Gandhiji, while he was at Pandharpur in the latter part of 1944. I quoted in it some passages from the Upanishads corresponding to his teachings of truth and non-violence, and also cited the story of an Upanishadic sage Mahatma (Servant of the World) who asked disease and death, when they approached him, to wait till he had finished his mission on earth, and lived for 116 years. I described Gandhiji as a great ruin of the present age, and wished him 116 years of life and activity to fulfil his mission on earth. To this letter he sent a reply, in his own handwriting, as follows: "Your letter. Rishis are made of sterner stuff. Let me remain what I am—a struggling servant of India and of humanity."

During the individual satyagraha movement of 1940-41, I was arrested on 25th November 1940 and was detained in the Vellore Jail, where I remained as a co-detenue with more than two hundred and fifty leading Communists of Andhra, Tamil Nad and Kerala till November, 1941, when I was released. We, Congress satyagrahis, were only a handful then in that jail. I acquired during that period of about eleven months, very intimate knowledge of the Communists, their methods of organisation, their literature and their plans of work after release. They collected a large number of Communist books, set up a big library in the jail, conducted classes very regularly every morning, often enacted the most violent dramas and delivered lectures every alternate night in the jail compound condemning Gandhi and his doctrines of truth and ahimsa. They also advocated political anarchy and sexual promiscuity. They refused, if not compelled every Communist to opt out of the jail in order to remove his aversion to violence. Some of

them told us, in a spirit of bravado, that, if Congressmen came into power, Communists would organise all sorts of agrarian and labour troubles and compel them to take repressive measures against the Communists, and that if they came into power, they would shoot all Congressmen and establish their own leadership over the masses.

After Soviet Russia became an ally of Britain, the Communists in our jail, as also others in India, who had been till then sworn enemies of Britain and admirers of Hitler, changed sides, and entered into a pact with the Government of India, and were released early in 1942. They then started several weeklies, and began to co-operate with British imperialism in every way possible, calling the War a "people's war". After the Congress organizations were all banned and Congressmen all over India were clipped in jail, Communists in India, with their headquarters in Bombay, took complete advantage of the freedom of speech, press and association that they got, and organized themselves on all fronts, viz. labour, students, kisans and women. When I was released in June 1943, I found the Communists strongly entrenched in Vijayvada (Bezvada), my own town, as their provincial headquarters. They were having large rallies of young men and women with attractive dresses, music and dancing. I was practically the only senior Congressman who was out of jail then and who was conversant with their tactics. They claimed that of all the provinces in India Andhra was their greatest stronghold, and that Bengal came next. The All India Communist Kisan Conference, held at Vijayvada in March 1944, was a huge affair. As I later wrote to Gandhiji after his release in May 1944, Bezvada was their Moscow, their Kremlin was only a few yards away from my Bezvada residence, and their Leningrad (Katur) was 16 miles to the east of Bezvada. I was all yet. Communists spied over my house, and supplied the police with the names of my visitors. At the same time some local communists often approached me to induce me to co-operate in their all-party unity celebrations. They also asked me to join the Friends of Russia Society. I refused to yield to their overtures, for I knew how their sole aim was to undermine the influence of Gandhiji and the Congress. I advised and helped in the organization of nationalist students, youths, kisan and labour associations to combat the Communist activities in Andhra. The Adhikari-Joshi report to the All India Communist Party Conference, held on 26th

September, 1942, at Bombay, clearly revealed their policy. They said that the issue before the country was 'Gandhism or Bolshevism', and that they should establish Bolshevism before the Congress leaders came out of jail. They wrote what the Tottenham Report was to write one year later, attributing to Gandhiji all the violence that broke out in the country.

We saw the need for combating this sort of propaganda, in order that Gandhism might live. Pro-Congress student organizations rose and became the most powerful rivals to the similar Communist organizations. Nationalist Kisan Conferences were held in some of the districts of Andhra. The Communists, while on one side acting as spies and informers of the police and getting Congressmen arrested, and also secretly setting fire to grain-heaps and haystacks of Congressmen here and there, were on the other hand posing before the people as Congressmen. No doubt our nationalist youths, students and kisans exposed the Communists in villages. Some of their own devices ways also made them unpopular. A Communist leader in Andhra wrote to me asking me to meet P. C. Joshi on 10th March at Vijayavada for a talk. I wrote in reply that Communists were anti-Congress and were helping British imperialism in their repressive policy against the Congress, and that no Congressman could have anything to do with the Communists. I also published my reply in the press, and it produced a sensation. A few other statements on the same lines had the desired effect. People saw the anti-Congress aims and methods of the Communists.

At this stage Gandhiji was released. Half a dozen Andhra nationalist (anti-Communist) youth leaders went to Panchgani with a letter of introduction from me. They could have no talk with Gandhiji who asked them to talk to Shri Pyarelal. I then wrote two long letters to Gandhiji. He acknowledged receipt of my letters and asked me my reactions to his interview with Mr. Stuart Gelder as also the acceptance by him (Bapu) of Rajaji's formula re the communal question. In fact I had already issued a statement according my support to him in both these matters.

In November 1944 I went to Sevagram for a week, and had three interviews with him, during one of which I took up the Communist problem. P. C. Joshi had come and seen Bapu. Letters from me and others had been

shown to him. But he had challenged the truth of their contents and had cited the names of Shri Rajaji, Shri Bhulabhai Desai and Shrimati Sarojini Devi to prove the respectability and non-violent character of the Communists. I asked Bapu to send any one of these three leaders to Andhra to make inquiries in my absence; I added that, if any portion in my letters was found to be false, disciplinary action might be taken against me for giving false information. Bapu said: "Don't worry, I believe you. I will issue statements in my own time and in my own way." I felt reassured.

Then I asked Bapu's permission to exclude the Communists from the assemblies and samitis which we were about to start in Andhra and other provinces as temporary substitutes for Congress organizations which were then under a ban. Bapu was at first inclined in favour of admitting them, as the chief work was the constructive programme, and as P. C. Joshi had promised that the Communists would co-operate with us in that work. I said they did not believe in the constructive programme, but wanted to join the assemblies and samitis in order to get respectability in the eyes of the people as Congressmen. Bapu said that, if they broke our discipline, they could be expelled. I pointed out to him that, if these assemblies and samitis were to be substitutes for Congress committees for political work also, then, so long as the Congress was non-cooperating with British imperialism in the war effort and called the war an imperialist war, we should not take into our organizations those who were calling the war the people's war and were co-operating in the war effort, apart from the question of violence and non-violence on which there was a complete divergence of opinion between us and them. Bapu agreed with me, and said that it was right to exclude the Communists from our assemblies and samitis. As the Communists still claimed the right to be enrolled as primary members of the Congress, Bapu advised me not to enrol primary members for these temporary assemblies and samitis. He also agreed to our strengthening the Congress through the Students' Congress and the Kisan Congress. He recommended the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association as a model for our work among labour.

Prof. A. G. Rangas similarly took up Congress kisan work after consultation with Bapu. The Communists were in a position saying that Rangas and I were disrupt-

ing the students and kisans. At the Andhra Students' Congress Conference, held at Masabhatam in January, 1945, the Students' Federation leaders asked me what authority I had to organize the Students' Congress. I had just received a letter from Shrimati Khurshedbehn, written on behalf of Bapu, authorizing Ranga to deal with kisan matters and myself to organize the Students' Congress, and I read it in the open Congress. The Communists were so angry that they brutally attacked some Congressmen in the streets that night and thrust their bodies with wooden spears. Students' Congress leaders came to me at midnight in great excitement, and I asked them not to retaliate but to report to the police. When I reported this to Bapu, he appreciated my action. The Communists began to commit violence openly against Congressmen.

I again visited Bapu at Sevagram, lived there for five days, and had several interviews with him. I had carried with me a lot of complaints regarding acts of violence perpetrated by Communists. Bapu in his silence wrote on a piece of paper that all students should join the Students' Congress and carry on the constructive programme. He defined the 'kisan' as an actual tiller of the soil and not one who leases his land to another. He asked me to study the working of the various constructive organizations at Sevagram, viz. the Talimi Sangh, Goseva Sangh, the All India Village Industries Association, and the All India Spinners' Association.

P. C. Joshi visited Andhra again in March, 1945, and the second Communist Kisan Conference was held at Govada in the Guntur district, which was largely attended. He said openly in his public speeches that all those who were starting rival kisan and student organizations should be punished with violence. When Congress kisans met at the same place a month later in still larger numbers, the Communists laid an ambush with a view to attacking three of us, Congress workers, with sticks and spears on our way back. By chance we took a different road and were saved. However, some handies in which Congress kisans were returning with women that night from the Conference were stopped, and some of the kisan leaders were beaten and stabbed, and were left almost dead on the road by Communists who ran away as the police approached the place.

P. C. Joshi, failing to convince Gandhiji of his bona fides, published a book containing Joshi-Gandhi letters, in

which Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee in Bengal and myself in Andhra were described as hars and fabricators of false accusations against the Communists. It was only after all the Congressmen were released from jails, and after the ban on Congress organizations was removed, that the Congress Working Committee met in the latter part of 1945 and instituted an inquiry about the misdeeds of Communists and got reports from the different Provincial Congress Committees. The Working Committee passed a resolution condemning the Communists, after which Communists resigned from all Congress committees.

In the elections to provincial legislatures that followed, the Communist Party set up 28 candidates against the Congress candidates. P. C. Joshi personally came to Andhra and delivered speeches in several centres to large audiences. It fell to me to reply to him before larger audiences. It was only in a labour constituency, in the whole of Andhra, that the Communist candidate succeeded, in all the other 27 constituencies the Communists failed.

A little later, during his South Indian tour in March 1946, Bapu strongly recommended that Shri Rajaji should be elected as the leader by the Congress legislators of Madras, that he should be the Premier again and the 1937 Cabinet should be restored. Andhras resented this as to them it appeared to remove the chances of Shri T. Prakasam, the Andhra leader, to become the Premier—particularly because Rajaji had not taken part in the 1943 movement. I was one of those who voted against Rajaji and for Shri Prakasam in the leadership election. But subsequent events proved how right Gandhiji was, and how the Madras Province plunged into misfortunes by not following the statesmanlike advice.

In November, 1946, I had a seventy minutes' interview with Bapu in the Bhangi Colony at New Delhi. I gave to him a report of the happenings in Hyderabad. The ban on the Hyderabad State Congress had been removed in September 1946 by the Nawab of Chhatari on the eve of his retirement from the Dewanship. The Nizam's Government and Muslim officials openly encouraged Muslim goondas to commit terrorism against State Congress people. A notorious Muslim goonda with his gang murdered a Congress worker, Mogalayya, in broad daylight and butchered another Congressman, and looted the whole locality in the fort at Warangal. Offi-

clubs took no action against him, though he was taken in procession in the streets of Warangal on the third day after the event. Two other Congressmen were shot to death in Warangal, and there was firing against the Hindus by the police and arrests of Hindus. Another Maharashtra State Congress leader was also murdered by Muslim goondas in an open street. I gave a report of all these happenings to Bapu. He replied that he already had reports about most of these things, and that he had written a personal letter to the new Dewan, Sir Mirza Ismail, to stop Muslim goondalism and to punish the culprits. Bapu asked me to follow the developments in Hyderabad closely and to inform him from time to time. Sir Mirza resigned before he could do anything, and left Hyderabad.

In November, 1947, when I went to New Delhi for the A.I.C.C. meeting, and again had an interview with Bapu, I gave him a report of things that had happened after my last talk with him. In order to put down the State Congress satyagraha, the worst atrocities like murder, arson, loot and rape were being perpetrated by Muslim goondas, Razakars and Muslim police and military against the non-Muslims of the State. I spoke to Bapu about all this. He said that the only method that he could suggest was to offer non-violent resistance to all this goondalism without running away out of fear. I fixed up an appointment for the Hyderabad State Congress Action Committee to have an interview with him two days afterwards, and left for Vijayavada the next day.

That was, alas, to be my last meeting with him.

Vijayavada,  
20-11-1948.

## AT SABARMATI

### *Prima Kuntak*

**I**T was on the 28th of May, 1929, that I first entered the Satyagrahashram at Sabarmati along with Gandhaji. Here are a few memories of the days I spent under his care till he started on the Dandi March next year.

He liked to sleep under the sky, unless it was actually raining. The other inmates of the ashram, who lived near him, generally liked to sleep in the open, but in the chilly winter they took shelter of the roof and shifted their beds to the verandah. But he never flinched. There lay his cot in the open, in winter as well as in summer. I followed suit, and placed my cot outside at a respectable distance from his. He would often bid me good night with his favourite saying: "Now sleep the sleep of the innocent."

There was a *pérít* tree in front of his residence at the ashram, which was known as *Hridayakusaj* (i.e. the Bower of the Heart). In the rainy days of July and August the tree put forth all its floral glory. Early morning one day I gathered all the delicate, fragrant red-white flowers with which the ground had been strewn overnight, wove them into a garland, put it into a basket, and covering it with the upper skirt of my sari, approached Gandhaji as he sat writing in his room.

"Mahatmaji, may I garland you?" I asked with some hesitation.

He looked up. "Why, is there any special occasion today?" he asked.

"Today is a grand holiday," I playfully replied. "I have gathered these lovely flowers of *pérít* from the garden, and made a garland for you."

"Where is it?"

"Here!" I showed the garland to him.

"Very fine! Now do this much for me. There are two patients in the ashram. When you have the satisfaction of garlanding me, take the garland at once, cut it into two pieces, give one each to both the patients, and let me know afterwards how they fare. Do you agree?"

"I do," I said, and carried out his instructions.

Once there was a sport competition on the ashram grounds between students of the Gujarat Vidyapeeth and those of the ashram. The latter were beaten by a small margin. Gandhiji was present on the occasion for nearly an hour and a half. At the end of the match all the players gathered round him and asked him to say something to them. "I would say only this," said Gandhiji, "that the defeated party should not be disheartened, and the victorious one should not feel elated." The remark was hailed with joy and laughter.

A month or so before the Dandi march in 1930, a smallpox epidemic broke out in the ashram. Gandhiji was opposed to vaccination, and parents in the ashram had not got their children vaccinated in deference to his opinion. When the epidemic broke out some children got severe attacks. Gandhiji took all possible preventive and curative measures which were approved of by competent doctors. Many of the patients were cured, but a few succumbed.

Gita was a girl of nine. Her soul flittered away while she was listening to her father who was reading the Gita at her bedside.

That night at 12 I suddenly got up. Gandhiji was sitting in his bed and was writing letters. The lantern was burning.

"Why are you writing at such an odd hour? Is it something very important? May I help you?" I asked him.

"No, no, you may sleep on. Let me go on writing," he replied drily, without turning his head.

I had no alternative but to sleep again. That night passed on. A few days later it was little Vasant's turn. He passed away while his father, Pandit Narayan Khare, was conducting the evening prayer of the ashram.

That night I again happened to wake at about midnight, and saw Gandhiji sitting on his bed and writing, as on the previous occasion.

And again when tiny Meghji followed suit, some days later, and as before I saw Gandhiji burning the midnight oil, I could not keep to my bed, but got up, and approaching him straightaway asked: "Oh, Mahatmaji, why do you get so much disturbed on the nights of these deaths? Every time a child passes away, you get up at dead of night and bury yourself in writing?"

"What else can I do?" he replied with a sigh. "I can't sleep. These kiddies are fading away like little buds. I feel the weight of their deaths on my shoulders. I prevailed upon their parents not to get them vaccinated. Now the children are passing away. It may be, I am afraid, the result of my ignorance and obstinacy, and so I feel very unhappy."

"Is it the Mahatma who is uttering these words?" I asked with a taunt. "You have made the correct diagnosis. You have applied correct remedies. Doctors have approved of your method of dealing with the disease. Now no one can resist death. If, after all, children die, who can help? But why should you, of all persons—you who always teach us to look to death as a friend and act in a dispassionate manner—should give way to attachment? It does not become a Mahatma. Why should your heart be so weak as that?"

"True," he replied, "I admit my weakness." He mused for a few seconds, then looked up, and said: "Howsoever brave and dispassionate a man may be, can he not be tender-hearted as well?"

Next evening he poured out his heart before the ashramites and declared that, while he himself had no faith in vaccination, he did not wish to impose his opinion on others. If any parents wished to get their children vaccinated, he added, they were free to do so.

No one availed of this liberty, and after that day there was no fatal case in the ashram.

It was a strict rule at the ashram that after 9 p.m. there should be quiet everywhere and lamps should be put off. Talking after 9 p.m. was prohibited. Occasionally, however, I saw Gandhiji himself breaking the rule. Mirabehn came to bid him good night, and at times Gandhiji talked to her for several minutes, even beyond the prescribed time limit. No one dared to speak about this or to give a timely hint to either of them. One night I heard a sister, who was my neighbour, talking loudly to a guest of hers after the bell was gone. When I drew her attention to the fact, she expressed her regrets, stopped the conversation, and went to bed. I then left my room and came to the compound to go to bed, when—lo and behold!—there lay Gandhiji on his cot, talking to Mirabehn who was standing in front of him!

"Mahatman, the bell has gone," I told him

"Ah! is it? I had no idea!" he exclaimed.

"Can a satyagrahi be so negligent?" I said. "—behn too was chatting just now, when I had to pull her up."

"She ought not to have done so," he said.

"And what are you doing?" I asked, and added: "When you break the rule, others follow suit."

"If I break the rule, you must pull me by the ear and bring me to my senses," he said quietly. "I too must obey the rules, for my responsibility of abiding by them is greater than that of anyone else."

He at once put an end to the conversation, and went to sleep.

Saevad,  
23-10-1948.

## FROM ORISSA

*Nityanand Kavungo*

**I**N 1933-34 Bapu planned to tour the country in his intensive campaign for the eradication of untouchability. During his tour he touched Orissa at Sambalpur, and from there he came to Puri, where he took a sudden decision which caused disappointment and annoyance to many of the workers who were faced with the sudden change of plans. I was one of those who were annoyed. Bapu decided that instead of using any conveyance he would walk through the length of Orissa. All our plans for mammoth meetings, where we could take the credit of showing Bapu to the people, were frustrated. In the foot march, which took place from early morning till sun-down, with a few hours' rest in the hot summer mid-day, thousands flocked round him and heard his simple message. People of the villages, the humblest of them, listened to the penetrating message asking them to cast off untouchability which was woven into their social fabric. 14 years later, when the great temple of Jagannath at Puri was thrown open to the Harijans, not only was there no opposition, but the bulk of the population felt as if a load had been taken off their conscience. Men, who know the social conditions of India during the last two centuries, would realise what a miracle it is!

Shrimati Rama Devi of Orissa is a devoted disciple of Bapu. She and her husband who held a lucrative post

under Government, gave up their all in 1922, and since then have buried themselves in the service of the people in villages. The Harijan march of Bapu had to be interrupted at Cuttack as he had to attend the A.I.C.C. meeting at Patna. After the A.I.C.C. he resumed the tour from Cuttack and marched on northwards. The interruption was for a little more than a week. In that week, Rama Devi, who was the only surviving child of her parents, lost her mother who succumbed to an attack of smallpox. The shock was terrific. She did not cry, and there was no outlet for her emotions. She just sat down looking dazed. We feared that she would be insane. After resumption of his tour Bapu learnt the condition of Rama Devi, and sent a message asking her to come and see him at one of his halts in the march. I accompanied her in the journey to meet Bapu. Her movements were mechanical. In the little village of Parushottampur, where Bapu was expected to have his midday halt, we reached about an hour earlier than his arrival. He came, washed his feet, sat on a mat, and sent for Rama Devi. When she came he just said: "You have come! Go and look after all these people, see that they are fed and looked after." Thus he said with a pat on her head. I observed a change in her looks. Instead of the stony vacant gaze, her eyes became normal. The tension on her features relaxed. She went about her work. Her grief was over.

Years after, in January, 1939, I had been to Bombay on business, and was asked by Bapu to see him at the Bardoli Ashram where he was staying. I had instructions to detrain at a wayside station where I was met by a member of the Ashram and taken in a car to Bardoli. I understood that this was arranged in order to enable me to go back to Bombay the same evening as otherwise there were no convenient train. When I reached Bardoli the friend, who was escorting me, asked me to wash. He took me straight to the washing place where I washed my face and feet and was eager to see Bapu. But my friend insisted on bringing me a glass of fresh sugarcane juice. When I protested I was told that Bapu had given instructions that I should be refreshed and given a glass of juice before I was taken to him. Some years back a bunch of us were scrambling for sugarcane juice on a hot afternoon in Wardha, and evidently Bapu had noticed my fondness for the sweet drink.

Cuttack,  
1-9-1948.

## GLIMPSES OF GANDHIJI

*Konda Venkatappayya*

WHEN once I asked Gandhiji what path he followed in his endeavour to realize God, he recited the first half of the first mantra in the Ishopanishad and said nothing more. The mantra is as follows:

ऐसावब्रह्मणि सर्वं ब्रह्मिन्मा जगन्मा ब्रह्म ।

मेव ब्रह्मेण भुव्योऽपि वा सूक्तं ब्रह्मणि जगद् ॥

It means that God pervades the whole universe, and that everyone should live and enjoy with a feeling of detachment and should not covet the wealth of others.

On another occasion I had a short discussion with him about the knowledge of God and the efficacy of prayer. It was his day of silence, and he gave written replies to my questions which I put to him one by one. Here are the questions and his replies to them.

Q.—In the Gita a verse says that everything works according to an inexorable law. Now if you pray to God, can He intervene and set aside the law for your sake?

A.—But the meaning at the bottom is: "Thy will be done." God's law is unaltered, but that very law says that every act has its result. In the prayer for the child, the father surrenders His will to God. The law works as if it were a person, and since every action tells, the prayer has an unforeseeable result. You should work out what I have written. The sum total of every act is a resultant. Draw a parallelogram of forces.

(He drew the parallelogram as follows.)



[I understood him to convey that God's law and prayer are the two forces, and the interaction of these forces produces the resultant.]

Q.—*Jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti*—should they not all go together? Unless you know God, how can you have *bhakti*? You cannot even offer him your *karma*.

A.—You must not reason like this. If you have no work and have only the so-called *bhakti*, the result will be lop-sided.

Q.—Do you know God to whom you pray?

A.—I don't. He is unknown to you and me. We do not always know the person to whom we are praying.

Q.—To whom shall we pray then?

A.—To the God whom you do not know.

Q.—But the shastras say that He is knowable.

A.—Since He is knowable, we search. It may take a billion years. Even if you do not believe, you must continue to pray. "Help Thou my unbelief," is a verse from the Bible. But it is improper for you to ask such questions. "Have faith and you will be whole," is another chap from the Bible. The Gita has many such parallel passages.

Q.—When I look at nature around me, I say to myself there must be one Creator, one God, and to Him I should pray.

A.—That is reasoning. God is beyond reason. But I have nothing to say if your reason is enough to sustain you.

In one of his tours in Andhra I was in charge of the arrangements, and so went with him from place to place. His party included Shrimati Kasturba and two young ladies besides his secretary, Shri Pyarelal. One summer morning we arrived at a village in the Guntur district, and were accommodated in a flimsy palmyra shed with the sides also made of palmyra leaves. This place, though not originally on the programme, was subsequently added on owing to pressure from local workers. They had thus no time to make proper arrangements. No sooner did Gandhiji and his party enter the shed than the crowd of villagers numbering about ten thousand, who had gathered in a pandal near by to see and hear him, madly rushed towards the shed. Some even began to pull out the palmyra leaves on the sides, while a much larger number were pushing their way right into the shed. There was imminent danger of the party being trampled down by the crowd, and every moment the situation grew more perilous as there appeared no way to avoid the catastrophe. I held my breath in suspense and anxiety. At this time of crisis Gandhiji, with wonderful presence of mind, took up his bundle of papers, and dashed through the maddening crowd towards the pandal and, making his way with a lightning speed, was seen getting up the dais, when the huge crowd, like an ocean-wave, fell back and,

running to the pandal, settled quietly round the platform, feasting their eyes with the sight of Gandhiji. Once he was out of the shed, the rest of the party was left there undisturbed.

Gandhiji always insisted on finishing all the engagements scheduled for the day. But often there was unavoidable delay owing to unexpected interruptions by enthusiastic parties from wayside villages, with the result that we could rarely keep to the timings of arrival at different places, and people had often to wait for many hours even at night. One afternoon we set out visiting villages in the Krishna district, and by the time we reached the last place but one on the programme for the day, it was past midnight. Dr. Pattabhi Sastaramayya was also with us. We decided to rest at this place for the night. Gandhiji and his party offered prayers and prepared for rest. But before they were asleep, some people from the village which had been given up for the night arrived and implored me to take Gandhiji to their place where, they said, a large number of villagers were waiting for him since the afternoon. With some reluctance I apprised Gandhiji of this fact. He got up at once, and without saying a word got into a car which was ready. Dr. Pattabhi and I accompanied him. On arrival at the village a loud and enthusiastic ovation was given to him by the large gathering of men, women and children. They forgot the strain which they had undergone in waiting without food and rest till such a late hour. On the way back Gandhiji said to Dr. Pattabhi and me: "You are taking a great responsibility, and if anything untoward happens to me, the curse of the whole of India will fall on your heads." He was completely exhausted, and there was very little time left to him for rest that night.

We had a similar experience during our visit to Bellary. According to the programme we were to start one day in the afternoon from Kurnool and proceed by car to Bellary, a distance of about 90 miles by road, and to reach there at 6 p.m. At the hour for departure, however, none of the cars available was found fit for the long journey. Gandhiji inquired if any train was available, and I replied that one would steam into the station in a few minutes. "Then," he said, "let us pack up at once and start for the station." My suggestion that we might go there the next morning, for the train would take us there very late in the night, met with an emphatic 'no'.

from him. So we packed up our things hurriedly and went to the railway station in *jathas* just in time to catch the train. A message was sent by wire to Bellary informing the workers there of Gandhiji's arrival by the night train. It was past midnight when we reached there, and the platform and the ground outside were seething with a large mass of people, making it well-nigh impossible for us to get out. Gandhiji somehow got into a car with the help of the volunteers. But I was caught into the crowd, and I feared that I might be crushed into pulp, when someone from behind suddenly lifted me up in his arms and took me in the direction opposite to that taken by the crowd, and afterwards led me to the place of the public meeting. The man who had thus saved me was a stranger to me, and disappeared as soon as he took me to the meeting. At the meeting Gandhiji was receiving welcome addresses from the different communities in the town. As I went up the platform he exclaimed: "Oh! you have come after all!" He found me without an upper cloth which I had lost in the melee at the station, and I had given up wearing a shirt. One of the welcome addresses, presented to him, was printed on a fairly big piece of khaddar. He threw it over me so that I might cover the upper part of my body with it!

After going through the engagements in the town, it was decided that we should go back to the railway station and take rest there, so that we might catch the train for Gustakkal early next morning at about 6 a.m. It was already 3 a.m., and we hastened to the station. After arranging for accommodation for Gandhiji and his party, I got into a corner and stretched myself for rest. Gandhiji, however, went to bed only after he searched for me and actually saw me resting.

Next morning, when the train arrived at the station, the station staff and others requested passengers in a second class compartment to vacate it for Gandhiji and his entourage. The passengers readily complied with the request. Gandhiji was shown the compartment as reserved for him. He at once asked if there were any passengers who were already travelling in it. He was told that they had vacated it willingly for his sake. He regretted the fact that they had been asked to vacate it, and, declining to enter it, he got into a third class compartment.

We had to change at Guntakkal on the way to Adoni. By the time we reached Guntakkal, the train for Adoni was already in the station, on the other side of the platform. We shouted for coolies to carry the luggage. But Gandhiji, without waiting for the coolies, took some articles of the luggage in his own hands and walked towards the other train; and every one of the party followed his example. Thus no coolie was needed, and a good deal of time was saved.

Guntur,  
25-9-1948

## GANDHIJI IN SOUTH AFRICA

*F. E. T. Krause*

**I**T is a trite but true saying, that small things often have great repercussions, and I have been wondering whether the incidents I am about to relate may not have influenced the future life and activities of Gandhiji in South Africa,—the spark, as it were, which set ablaze the fires of self-sacrifice and devotion to the cause of his people.

It was in 1893, that I returned from Europe, where I had been studying law, and started practice as an Advocate of the Old High Court of the South African Republic at Pretoria. I had taken a law degree in Holland, and had also been called to the English Bar, having been a student at the Middle Temple, London. Gandhiji had, likewise, about that time, become an English Barrister, and had gone to Natal, where there was a large colony of Indians—mostly descendants of the Cheap Indian labourers recruited by the sugar planters of Natal.

It will be remembered, that the Colonists of the Cape Colony, in about 1838, started their great trek across the Orange and Vaal Rivers, because they were dissatisfied with the native policy and oppressive legislation of the then Colonial Government. Historically, these Colonists have become known as the "Voortrekkers". They were mostly of Dutch or German origin with a sprinkling of English. The territories now known as Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal were inhabited by the Bantu

or natives, and the Voortrekkers, consequently, often came into conflict with the marauding tribes, who, under their savage chiefs, lorded it over the weaker tribes and indulged in pillaging and murdering expeditions.

It was the policy, however, of the "Voortrekkers", to acquire a new home by treaty and bargaining, and not by force or war. In this they largely succeeded, and the intercourse between the Europeans or Whites on the one hand and the natives on the other hand was, generally, of a friendly nature.

Having regard to these historical facts, it will be readily understood, that one of the first concerns of the "Voortrekkers" was clearly to define the political, social and economic relationship between the two races, the White and the Black.

In 1844, Article 29 of what is known as the "Drie en Dertig Artikelen" laid down this policy, viz. "No natives shall be allowed to establish their residences near towns to the detriment of the inhabitants, except with the consent of the full Raad."

The Constitution or "Grondwet" of the Republic was framed in 1856, that is after the "Voortrekkers" had succeeded in establishing settled communities.

Article 9 enacted that "no equality between white and black shall be recognised in Church or State." The policy, therefore, was that the two races should live together in peace—there was no oppression or exploitation—each race was allowed to develop on its own racial, social and economic lines.

From time to time, laws were passed to clarify and to stabilise this relationship. As the European population, however, increased, it became necessary for the protection of the Native and especially to prevent his exploitation by a superior and civilized race, to accept the responsibility the altered circumstances imposed upon the Whites and so to definitely lay down the extent of that responsibility. This was done by Wet No. 4 of 1885, which rightly has been named the "Magna Charta" of the Natives in the Transvaal. By this law, the principle of benevolent guardianship or trusteeship was introduced. The State President became the Paramount Chief of all native tribes in the Republic. It was recognised that the native was not ripe to shoulder the responsibilities of civilized life and required guidance and help. His laws

and customs were, however, preserved, provided they did not conflict with the principles of civilization and the dictates of natural justice. The native was consequently encouraged to develop economically, and socially, on his own lines, and his exploitation by the white man was frowned upon and prohibited.

A previous law, namely Wet 9 of 1870, had regulated the movements of natives and had enacted that they should be in possession of a "pass" if they desired to travel outside their own areas. Article 12 of this law contains a most remarkable and significant principle in that it emphasizes, in the clearest language, the responsibility of the government towards the native. It says "Holders of such passes shall be considered to be subjects of the State and shall be entitled to the full protection of the law and the government, just like any other subject."

In view of the gross misrepresentations which have, from time to time, been made with regard to the colour question in South Africa, I have deemed it advisable, for the information of interested persons, shortly to set out the above facts, because, without this historical background it is impossible to appreciate and to understand the subsequent events. It should be noted, that the Voortrekkers only came into contact with the native or black man, and that their policy had reference solely to those races.

They did not visualise, at the time, that a white skin is not the hallmark or prerogative of a civilized human being. All races who did not possess white skins were classed as uncivilized natives, and the above policy, which was evolved for the treatment of the native, was automatically extended to all coloured persons, amongst them being Indians. It was due to this confusion of mental outlook that the "colour prejudice" in South Africa was created. This prejudice has become traditional, and added hereto is the fear that the supremacy of the white man is being menaced and endangered by the numerically larger population of black and coloured citizens. Of a population of about ten millions only about two million are Europeans. The result of this has been the enactment of restrictive laws, entrenching the domination of the white man.

It was in this political atmosphere that Gandhi first visited the Transvaal. I believe it was in 1893 that I met him in Pretoria. A brother of mine, Dr. A. E. J. Krause,

was then the Attorney General of the Republic. The law at that time was that no native was allowed to be at large, especially at night, without being in possession of a pass from a white man. The police had a right to stop any native and to demand his pass and, if he could not produce one, he could be arrested, fined or imprisoned as if he had committed a criminal offence.

Gandhiji was liable to the same restrictive laws and so, to protect him, my brother granted him a Certificate of Exemption. I remember an incident which occurred when my brother had invited him one night to dinner. The natives, serving at the table, protested at being called upon to attend to an Indian, and it was only after it had been explained to them that Gandhiji was a great man, just like a native chief, that they were prepared to continue their service.

In 1896, I was appointed the State Prosecutor at Johannesburg, and since that time and until the Anglo-Boer War in 1899, I had many opportunities of meeting Gandhiji.

The impression I formed was that he resented the fact that his people should be and were placed in the same category as the uncivilised and primitive native, and that they should consequently be subject to the same restrictive laws. I believe the inference is justified that when on his first visit to the Transvaal he found that the civilised and educated Indian, by reason only of the colour of his skin, was looked upon as an inferior human being, that it was this circumstance which was the spark which fired him with that resolution to devote all his life and energy to right the wrongs of his people. Small beginnings often lead to great things.

Devotion to a cause, and self-sacrifice, are the outstanding attributes of him who is determined to right an unjust wrong done to his race or people.

Gandhiji's life was one of unselfish devotion and sacrifice for the Indian people, irrespective of race, colour or creed.

I believe it was what he experienced and saw on his first visit to the Transvaal that was the determining factor of that life of Devotion!

Pretoria,  
29-9-1948.

## THE CHANCELLOR OF GUJARAT VIDYAPITH

J. C. Kumarappa

ONE of the greatest assets that Gandhiji possessed and which many leaders lack was his keen sense of humour which carried him through many awkward situations and won for him even those who were inclined to be critical. Here I narrate a case where his humour comes out mingled with dignity.

For several years the courtesy of the sub-editors had conferred on me a Doctorate. The reason for this was that all the three of my brothers possess academic Doctorates in their special subjects, and there have been constant mistakes being made in identifying the various brothers. To avoid any awkwardness, the sub-editors of newspapers had always referred to me as 'Doctor Kumarappa'. In my earlier public career as a stickler for form I had often written to the newspapers concerned correcting their mistakes, but I found the postage on such letters was generally wasted, probably due to the rapid turnover in the sub-editors detailed out to deal with the various news items. For this reason, after a little while, I left the sub-editors to their own devices.

Gandhiji generally had his own personal way of referring to those around him. The usual honorific that he used for me was 'Professor'. This originated from my being Professor Emeritus in Gujarat Vidyapith which was then functioning as a National University. In 1942 I was arrested for my writings and kept in detention. Later on I was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment on each of three counts and kept in jail away from all other political prisoners who were detainees. I spent my seclusion in reading and writing which resulted in the two books, *Practice and Precepts of Jesus* and *Economy of Permanence*. When I was released in 1943, I sent these manuscripts to Gandhiji as he would be interested in the subjects dealt with therein. But I had not asked him for a foreword for either of them, not wanting to burden him with such extra work.

To my surprise, one day I received the manuscript of *Practice and Precepts of Jesus* with the note headed 'A word'. The letter was enclosed in an envelope addressed

to me as Dr. Kumarappa D.D. Knowing Gandhiji as I did I took this to be his impish joke on a layman like me writing a book dealing with religious interpretations.

A few months later I received back the manuscript of *Economy of Permanence* with a foreword voluntarily contributed by Gandhiji, which was enclosed in an envelope addressed to Dr. Kumarappa D.D., D.V.I. At first I was a little puzzled to know what this D.V.I. was, but when I read the foreword the secret was made clear as he referred to me in it as a 'Doctor of Village Industries'.

I thought again that this was only another instance of 'peckish' humour. But to my surprise he had referred to me in the foreword as 'Doctor Kumarappa' and not as 'Prof. Kumarappa' as he was wont to do. I referred the matter back to Gandhiji to get his permission to amend the foreword accordingly. He had always been a stickler for form and never relished anybody altering even verbally any of his writings. To this he again replied back that he meant every word he had written, that I was not to alter anything in the foreword, and that it should go into print as it was.

Later, when I met Gandhiji personally, I twitted him about his arrogance about conferring Doctorates on whomsoever he pleased and, what was more, coining new degrees to suit his purpose. To this with a good-humoured laugh he said: "Why should you question my authority to confer Doctorates or to coin degrees? Am I not the Chancellor of the Gujarat Vidyapāth?"

Then in a later card he sent me he justified himself even on the merits of the thesis submitted.

Wardha,  
3-7-1948.

## SINCE 1932

*W. Lath*

I FIRST met Gandhiji soon after my arrival in India in December 1932. I can picture now the dusty road outside the Central Jail at Yeravda, where we waited with others for admission to the prison. My first sight of

him was of a figure reclining on a string cot under a mango tree in a court of the prison, almost as dusty as the road outside. He was talking to a few khaddar-clad visitors in what was probably Gujarati, while he balanced a fallen mango leaf on his toes. Soon he finished with them, and he turned his attention to me, and the Indian brother of our Ashram who was with me. A sore place on my foot attracted his attention, and I received my first lecture on nature cure. We then got on to other things, and must have discussed the ethics of his fast over the 'Poona Pact', which had recently been made, because a letter I had from him a few weeks later, when I was staying at the Sabarmati Ashram at his suggestion, was chiefly on this subject. I cannot lay hands on the letter, but remember how he used the example of Jesus to justify moral coercion on those we love.

The most memorable aspect of this first meeting was the effect of the impact of his personality on a young man, fresh from another land and another culture. It brought home the essential simplicity of true greatness, and removed for ever reverence for the outer trappings of those who would impose their importance upon others by a display of circumstance.

Apart from the wedding of Devadas, almost all my meetings with or associations with Gandhiji in that first year were concerned with fasts. Two of us were asked to go to Purnakuti to take part in the ceremony of the breaking of the twentyone day fast on May 29, 1933. We arrived there on cycles, and had considerable difficulty over getting in. Cars streamed up the winding drive, but we were held at the gate by the police. It took some time to convince the police that we should be allowed to proceed. Having left our cycles at the gate we climbed on foot. As we went Keshav Bhavsalkar and I discussed the chances of the Harijan boy who had promised to bring the orange for the juice from which the fast was to be broken. We hoped that if he were on foot he would yet manage to pass through the cordon.

On arrival at the house we found Mrs. Sarojini Naidu to be the master of ceremonies. Soon we were in our place in front of Gandhiji's bed. He looked very weak. If my memory serves me right Prof. A. S. Wadia was there to recite from the Avesta. Dr. Ansari with the Koran. Keshav and I sang one of Gandhiji's favourite hymns. *Ravalluna* was rendered, and took me

back to the moonlit prayer ground above the Sabarmati. It was announced that as the Harijan had had failed to arrive—Keshav and I looked at one another—Gandhi's hostess had supplied the orange.

The brief fast that followed a few months after was far more nearly fatal. It arose over the refusal of Government to continue facilities for Harijan work on his re-arrest. He was soon removed to the Sassoon Hospital. I did not see him during this fast, but C. F. Andrews, who was staying at our Ashram, went down every day, and returned with increasingly disquieting reports. One evening he returned to say that Gandhi had almost died that day. He had disposed of everything, even the little bottles by his bed, and seemed to have lost the will to live. Andrews considered some word to rally him. At last he whispered: "Bapu, who will reconcile India with Britain if you die?" He told us that Gandhi responded to this challenge.

In the following month, September 1933, I was returning from Calcutta, and broke journey at Wardha, where Gandhi was resting before his Harijan tour. C. F. Andrews was staying in a tent in the compound of Jambhalaji Bajaj who kindly welcomed me to a share of the tent. I went after the evening prayers to pay my respects to Gandhi. Although I had no desire to add to his burdens, time was fixed for an interview next day. Meanwhile Andrews told me that he was very concerned over Gandhi's fasts, and was attempting to find out if there were a psychological explanation of them. He had been catechising Gandhi on the circumstances of each fast since the first, taken years ago in South Africa. He had come to the conclusion that when any circumstances had become intolerable to Gandhi, where other men would have given way to an outburst of anger, Gandhi diverted his emotion into the self-immolating channel of a fast.

Next morning I had an interesting sidelight on Gandhi's character. One of the regular members of the Ashram asked if my interview with him was of a private kind, or if I would mind her presence at it. I said that I had no objection to her being present, but rather wondered that there should be need for it, since she was always at hand to see him. She then told me that Gandhi gave more of his time to those who had questions to ask or objections to offer, than the 'fully converted'. It emphas-

ed the fact that there have been few great men with less time for the 'yes man', and the courtier, than Gandhiji.

My chief recollection of the interview was that, like a true *shukya*, I asked the guru to expound a passage in the Bhagavadgita. I think it must have been from the tenth chapter. The point was that, if God is expressed in every phase of life, including the phases of human life, could it not be said that to change the lot of a group of human beings, the Harijans, was in some sense an interference with a manifestation of God? Gandhiji did not directly answer this point. What he did say was that he felt like a child in the arms of a great power, wrestling with that power for a boon he felt sure the power was willing to grant. We discussed also the purpose of God for men. Here Gandhiji said that to him God was like a general commanding an army, but with this difference. He commanded not only the army as a whole, but issued His orders to each individual also. God's purpose for the individual, and his purpose for mankind as a whole were complementary. The fulfilment of the one was part also of the fulfilment of the other.

I saw Gandhiji several times on his visit to Poona in the following year. He was staying on the Bombay Road not far from the Ashram, and paid us a visit, with Kasturba. My chief recollection of his visit was a comment on a picture of Christ in the Ashram by an Indian artist, and in an Indian setting. He felt that historical figures should be portrayed in the setting of the times and places in which they lived, and hoped that he himself would never be portrayed other than as he was.

Thereafter for a number of years I did not meet Gandhiji. He did not spend much time in Poona, and I was always diffident of taking up his time, unless there was some need to do so. We kept touch in various ways without actually meeting. In fact I was reluctant to add unnecessarily to his burdens during his fast in the Agakhan's palace in 1943. However, a lady came down from North India with the intention of seeking an interview and it fell to me to arrange it. I was surprised at the apparent calm with which the authorities regarded the possibility of Gandhiji's death. There was however no difficulty over permission to visit the palace. The only contact I had had with Gandhiji since his imprisonment was the sending in of a volume of Christian hymns for which he had asked.

We reached the palace on the evening before the date for the breaking of the fast. Amongst those waiting was Rathindranath Tagore, and C. Rajagopalachari came out while we were waiting. We discussed the refusal of Government to allow any visitors to be present at the breaking of the fast next day, and raised the question as to whether he should be asked to break the fast that evening while some friends were gathered. This was not done. Eventually we were admitted to the palace, and found Gandhiji lying on a bed in a fairly large room. Though we had not met for some years, he welcomed me by name, when I went forward in my turn to greet him. No one spoke much as we did not wish further to exhaust him. There was one moment of anxiety when an overzealous visitor embraced Gandhiji with excess of vigour. To me he seemed in better shape than at the end of the 1933 fast of 21 days. I remarked on this to Mrs. Naidu who was in the next room, and looking very ill herself. She said that the months of rest in imprisonment had certainly done much for Gandhiji's general health. I gathered that the danger had been that of overmuch acidity.

Gandhiji's health was certainly not good when I went to Sevagram, in January 1943, to take leave of him before going on a visit to England. He was keeping silence for the resting of his throat, and conversed on scraps of paper. My chief object was to be clear on certain issues concerned with 1942, in case I should have occasion in England to speak on the subject. I was particularly concerned to understand the meaning of the 'Quit India' campaign, whether it was a demand for the complete withdrawal of the British, or only withdrawal from the civil government, but with liberty for the Allies to fight from India. I suggested the example of Egypt as analogous. There the Egyptians were in charge of their own Government, but the Allies were allowed to fight the Libyan Campaign from Egypt. I understood Gandhiji to accept this analogy, but with the addition that India would be much more co-operative in her own defence. I was impressed by the way in which Gandhiji answered all my questions from contemporary documents, though some of these, such as his correspondence with Max Slade, concerning preparations for invasion in Orissa, was not yet published, this being among the significant matter omitted when Government published its correspondence with Gandhiji. I was struck as ever with Gandhiji's readiness with a clear

straightforward answer to questions asked, and surprised as ever that the charge of subtlety should sometimes have been made against him. When Pyarelal gave me copies of the complete correspondence, he told me that there were no plans as to the way the movement should take in 1942. All was left to Gandhiji, and he alone of the leaders expected the Viceroy to give time for negotiations after the famous August resolution was passed.

I also asked Gandhiji if he had any message for friends in England. He took time to compose one and I only wish I could have used it more than I did, but the times in England in the last months of the war were not propitious, and my own mood was not hopeful. I give the message here as it shows Gandhiji unwavering in his principles even at that time when any lesser man could hardly have been other than embattered. It also shows his understanding of the British people and of their psychology.

Dear Father Land,

I am so glad you came. Please tell all our English friends that we all do our duty regardless of result. Please not an English dress and that duty will be spent when debt becomes a devotion!

Non-violence—translated love—is the supreme law for human beings. It knows no exceptions. I have tried all these years to live by that law and hope to die as that state.

Yours

M. K. GANDHI

On my return from England in September of 1945 I found Gandhiji at the Nature Cure Clinic in Poona. He told me to come to see whenever I wished, and Rajkumar Amrit Kaur reassured me on the point of taxing his energies by my visits, by telling me that such visits as were not directly to deal with details of his work were something of a recreation to him. Thus emboldened I saw him several times. Our talk was firstly concerned with the situation in England. I found Gandhiji disappointed over the aftermath of the Simla talks, and with little hope of genuine improvement in relations between India and Britain.

Our further chief topic in these talks was that of religious education. There was at that time considerable agitation in Christian circles in Travancore over a proposed piece of legislation to bring about universal primary education in the State. This object was generally approved, but the Christians, who were the chief pioneers of primary education in the State, were afraid of losing

control of their schools. I asked Gandhiji if he did not agree that education should be permeated with religion. He would not go further than that it should be accompanied by religion, in other words, that religion should be allowed to be taught outside school hours. This by itself would hardly be satisfactory to the Christians, as without management and appointment of staff, there could be no surety that what would be learnt in the period of religious instruction would not be cancelled by the attitude taken in teaching the other subjects.

There happened to be visiting Poona at that time a Christian leader, who was specially sympathetic to the proposals of the State authorities, and somewhat critical of the extent to which his own section of the Church had made use of the privileges they had hitherto possessed. It seemed a valuable opportunity for someone so comparatively objective from the actual scene, to meet Gandhiji. He consented to this, but the meeting was unfortunate. The arranged time fell on a day when conference on the political situation had become unexpectedly urgent. Gandhiji could ill spare even a few minutes. He was very cautious in everything he said, and strongly warned the visitor I had brought not to misrepresent what he had said. I saw Gandhiji in a mood I had not seen before, and realised how careful he had to be in any controversy lest he be misunderstood or misquoted. His lightest word was of such weight. I felt I had made a mistake in bringing my companion. It was altogether an uncomfortable experience, yet at the end it gave me a moment that is among the proudest in my life. Gandhiji told the visitor that, if he had anything further to say, he could tell it to me, as I could meet him (Gandhiji) at any time, for: "Father Lush and I are fellow-workers in the same field." Perhaps it is well that the meeting at Wardha after Gandhiji's death decided to leave this field undefined, and the fellow-workers unenumerated. The first is too wide, and the second are too many for computation.

A few evenings later I took leave of Gandhiji, as his departure from Poona was near. While we talked a bowl was brought to him. My last sight of Gandhiji was of him settling to his frugal meal, while against the wall at the side of the room, a restive prisoner for his health's sake, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel sat sombrely consuming a vast glass of milk.

Bombay,  
14-10-1948.

## FIRST NON-COOPERATION

*Gurdial Mallik*

**O**CTOBER 1919 The atmosphere in the Punjab was tense and tearful as the consequence of a chain of tragic happenings culminating in the hair-raising incident of the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. To relieve the pressure of pain under which the people of the province were groaning night and day, Gandhiji visited Lahore and other places which had witnessed the sorry spectacle of man's inhumanity to man earlier, in the autumn. His presence was both a balm and a benison to the heart-lacerated, humiliated Punjab.

Prior to his arrival in the capital, however, C. F. Andrews—that "Faithful Apostle of Christ"—accompanied by the writer, who was then his personal assistant, made a tour of the affected areas and collected statements, in writing, of all those who had suffered under the hob-nailed heel of martial law. While taking down these depositions he was often asked whether the latter would lead to any relief in their miserable condition and they were told that, apart from their statements serving as a safety-valve to their suppressed emotions of anger and enmity, these would be availed of as affording additional opportunities to them to have their say before the Hunter Committee appointed to inquire into the "red" regime of their erstwhile satrap, Sir Michael O'Dwyer. This answer appeared to fill them with the fervour of hope.

At last the Hunter Committee arrived in Lahore. On the eve of its arrival Gandhiji discussed with a number of our national leaders, who had assembled there for the purpose, the desirability or otherwise of leading evidence before the Committee. The discussion lasted for several hours, at the end of which Gandhiji found himself to be in the minority of one against appearing before the Committee on behalf of the aggrieved people all others being in favour of doing so. Consequently Gandhiji requested them to let him return to Saharnati since his opinion being what it was, he would be of no use to them. This came as a shock to the leaders. However, they pleaded with him for a reconsideration of the whole matter afresh on the morrow. To this Gandhiji agreed.

And then in the course of the night his magnetic personality worked a miracle. He argued with most of the leaders severally. And lo! next morning when the discussion was resumed, it was discovered that only one of the participants favoured the leading of evidence before the Committee. The tables had been turned by the wizard.

But the logic and magic of Gandhiji cost the writer a veritable crucifixion. For, he who had, during the tour in the affected areas, held out hopes, along with C. F. Andrews, to those who had given the statements that they would have a chance to shed hot tears of woe, so to speak, before Lord Hunter and his colleagues, was now asked to tell them, as they flocked to the Town Hall where the Committee was to hold its inquiry, that Gandhiji wished them not to give any evidence! At once their faces fell, and though they obeyed the injunction of the great-souled leader, they heaped curses on him for having frustrated their hopes, while his humble messenger was dubbed as a cheat.

The messenger, of course (ignorant as he then was of the inner workings of the mind of Gandhiji), was all anger against him who had sent him to convey the decision of the Congress against deposing before the Committee. He tried hard and honestly to reconcile himself to this decision, but lamentably failed, always being handicapped in his progress towards reconciliation by the thought that, if non-cooperation was the objective in view, then why were the Indian members of the Committee supplied regularly, every evening, "on the sly", with a series of questions, concerning the tragic happenings in the Punjab, to enable them to cross-examine the Government witnesses? Did this action—which, I was assured, had the assent and approval of the leaders—not detract from the spirit of true non-cooperation? Or was it in the nature of presenting the other side of the shield, so that the Committee might be assuaged in envisaging the whole situation aright?

On my return from the Town Hall, I did not go straight to report that I had carried out Gandhiji's orders. Instead, I went back to my own room in my host's house, and as I was still smarting under the sense of humiliation (as I considered it then in the impetuosity and obtuseness of my youth) I shut myself up there. In the meantime, Gandhiji kept on asking C. F. Andrews, repeatedly, if I had returned. When an unusually long time

had elapsed C. F. Andrews made inquiries about me at my host's house, and was told that I had already come back! So he at once made for my room, and tried to persuade me—as he alone could, with Christ-like charity—to accompany him to Gandhiji, saying that the latter would be very pleased with my having complied with his wishes. After a good deal of hesitation I said I would follow him after some time. He then went back to where Gandhiji was staying. As, however, I took a little longer time than I had expected to go there, lo and behold! I saw Gandhiji himself, along with C. F. Andrews walking in the direction of my host's house. I ran forthwith to meet them. Gandhiji, in acknowledging my greetings, just looked into my face, and, perhaps, saw a trace of resentment still lurking there. Therefore he gave me a paternal pat on my back, and my inner stiffness melted though for a while, like mist before the sun.

For many years afterwards whenever I had an occasion to meet Gandhiji, the latter hailed me with a heart-warming slap on the back together with the question put with a twinkle in his beaming eyes: "Have you been reconciled even now to the wisdom of our decision in 1919?" And I must confess that till the very last I had to nod my head in dissent. The incident, however, has ever remained embedded in my consciousness as the occasion on which he gave the country its first lesson of non-cooperation.

Juhu,  
21-8-1948.

PS—After the foregoing was written, the editor of this volume has drawn my attention to three relevant facts in connection with the incident narrated here: (1) In the first instance Gandhiji welcomed the appointment of the Committee. He wrote: "We must help them (the people of the Punjab), and we shall best do so, not by spilling ink over showing the weakness of the personnel of the Committee or over its not being a Royal Commission, but by concentrating ourselves upon seeing that there is no espionage either on the one side or the other, that the people of the Punjab are permitted to have a free atmosphere to work in"—*Young India* 10-9-1919. (2) Ten days later, while supporting the Indemnity Bill, he wrote: "We must, therefore, see to it that we obtain a full public and impartial investigation of all the cases in which we believe that palpable injustice has been done."

The question therefore to consider is: Has Lord Hunter's Committee the simple power of entering upon such an investigation? If it has not, I would unhesitatingly tender the advice I did in South Africa, namely, that of abstaining from any participation in giving evidence before the Committee. Secondly, I would agitate for the release of the political offenders so called, such as Lala Harikisanlal, Lala Goverdhandas, Dr. Satyapal, Dr. Kitchlew and others. They must be able to give their evidence with the same freedom and the same dignity as the Viceroy and Sir Michael O'Dwyer if the latter will condescend, as they ought to, give evidence before the Committee. Thirdly, we should concentrate our energy upon collecting, marshalling and sifting evidence of the wrongs in the Punjab and elsewhere."—*Young India*, 20-9-1919 Thus, the editor wishes to point out, Gandhiji, while asking people and workers to prepare the evidence, had sounded a note of timely warning that the tendering of the evidence depended on certain important conditions being fulfilled. (3) This non-cooperation related only to the Punjab, for Gandhiji himself gave evidence before the Committee later at Ahmedabad with reference to the disturbances in Gujarat.

3-10-1942.

G. M.

## SMALL THINGS I LEARNT FROM HIM

*Kishorlal Mashruwala*

I DO not exactly remember the occasions on which I learnt several small things from Gandhiji. I shall just mention what they are.

1. This was perhaps when I met him for the first time in Champaran in 1917. He asked me to copy out a passage from the *Indian Year Book* on a sheet of foolscap paper. As the paper was larger than I needed I folded it up, made a crease by passing my fingers over it, and began to tear it along the crease. Gandhiji stopped me, and asked me to cut it with a knife. "When you tear along a crease with your hands," he said, "fibre appear along the edges. They jar upon the eye. You should make it a rule always to divide the paper with a paper-cutter or an ordinary knife."

2. Once he showed me how to open up the flap of an envelope, the gum of which had got stuck. He introduced a fountain pen into a slight opening under the flap, and quickly rolled it round the edge. He said: "Do you see how it opens up without injuring the paper?" This is a method which everyone should know."

3. He was displeased if he saw a letter placed in an envelope with irregular foldings. He said: "When you fold your letter you must see that the edges coincide properly and the fold is regular. An irregular folding creates a bad impression upon the receiver about you. It looks slovenly."

4. One of my young nephews lived with me at Sabar-mati. He once tore his clothing during play and then went straight to Bapu's room. Bapu saw the torn condition of the cloth, and when he saw my wife later he showed his displeasure at it. He said: "One need not be ashamed of clothes repaired with sewing or patches. Poverty in itself is not a matter for shame. But there is no excuse for a person to put on unwashed or dirty clothes. A cloth must be repaired as soon as it is torn, and washed if it has become dirty."

5. I may also mention a habit which I developed, under his influence, to a greater extent than commendable, as it verges on uncleanliness and disorderliness. It is that of preserving and using bits of paper written on one side, wrappers on book-post packets etc., and used envelopes. Perhaps the instinct of thrift was inherent in me, and it got encouragement by his example. I am not at all proud of it; I rather feel ashamed of the extent to which it has grown. But it seems to have got hardened in spite of my own mental protest against it.

Wardha,  
31-8-1948

## SWEET AND SAD

*P. G. Mazumkar*

**W**HEN I was studying in the English sixth standard, I contributed an article to the school Annual, wherein I stated that my life-ambition was to advance culture, through work in the field of education. All seemed to like my writing. Thereafter my father went to Sevagram for the first time in 1944, after his release from jail, for a meeting of the Kasturba Trust Fund. I insisted on his taking my article and give it to Bapu for his opinion. My joy knew no bounds when I got, through my father, a letter in Bapu's own handwriting

Dear Parashottam,

You have selected the best but a difficult ideal. May God help you. Do come here some time. Love

BAPU

It was May 1944. Bapu was at Juhu. I went to him with my father. After the talks (between him and my father) were over, I placed in Bapu's hands my autograph-book for his autograph. He took the book with the five-rupee note, and asked for a fountain pen, which was then offered to him by my father. But he returned it, stating that it was of foreign make. He even rejected my pen, which was known as 'Goopur's Perfection' and was made at Calcutta, under the impression that it was of foreign make. He signed his autograph with a pen lying near him. While signing his autograph, he gave us, in a romantic manner, the history of his own pen. He said, "Once I had been to Banaras. Mahadev was with me. I lost my pen there. Mahadev was naturally upset. So our host, the late Shrivaprasad Gupta, presented a pen to me. He gave one to Mahadev also. I am still using that pen. It is entirely Indian-made,—manufactured in Banaras—and it works well." After saying this, he said with a smile, "I was told the story (of the manufacture of the pen) by Shrivaprasad. I do not know anything about it. But what he stated must have been true."

It was the month of May in 1945. There was a meeting of the Kasturba Fund Trustees in the cool climate of Mahadeleshwar. Bapu presided over it. During the discussion on a certain subject, Shri Devadas (youngest son

of Gandhaji), who is a trustee of the Fund, said: "Bapu, I wish to say something about this." Bapu said "Surely, say whatever you like." "But it is something against the view you propound," said Devadas. Bapu smiled and said: "An obedient son may feel shy of speaking to the face of his father. But you need have no such feeling. Say frankly what you want." Pointing to Shri Thakkar Bapa, he added with a hearty laughter. "But look here, here are two instead of one Bapa (father). I can appreciate, therefore, your embarrassment." Shri C. Rajagopalachari happened to be there at the time, and he caused addition to the peak of laughter by saying: "But, Bapu, here there are three fathers instead of two." This was quite correct, as Shri Rajaji is the father-in-law of Shri Devadas. Bapu had all along joined in the laughter.

I was in Delhi in October 1946, and one day (on 24th October) accompanied my father to the Bhangi Colony at prayer time. As we approached the place, we noticed some turmoil from a distance. We were afraid that we were a bit late for the prayers. Instead, we saw a different situation. Bapuji was standing on the platform, with others, and was talking to the crowd, some among whom were raising some slogans. The situation appeared to me from a distance to be strange and sad.

Bapuji was standing and was saying something with a sad heart as appeared from his face. It was not possible to know what exactly was happening. I imagined that he might be saying good-bye with a heavy heart, to the crowd, on the eve of his departure for Bengal next day. We entered the premises with curiosity, and stood on the left side of the prayer platform. We saw some young and angry faces among the crowd, carrying boards displaying the following slogans: "Down with Bengal Ministry", "Save Bengal Hindus from mass slaughter", "Expel Bengal Governor", "Remove Sahrawardy Ministry", "Rescue abducted women". They were very vocal, with slogans against the Muslim League and the League Ministry in Bengal. We learnt afterwards that they were local Bengali Hindus. Bapuji was appealing to all of them to be quiet. He said to the angry crowd: "Prayers will begin if you keep quiet. You have come here for prayers. You can go elsewhere, if you do not wish to join these. There is no obligation on anyone here (to remain present), but if you choose to stay, you must keep quiet."

For a while nobody complied with his request. The slogans continued. He was patiently trying to have his

say; but who would hear him in such a tumult? At last one voice angrily said to him. "Gandhiji, we want the Central Government to intervene in this matter. We want that our people must be saved from this calamity. We want you to intervene. Why don't you immediately go to Bengal?" I also felt moved at the piteous appeal of the man to the Father of the Nation. What could helpless people do in such a situation? Whom else could the afflicted appeal to, but to the Father of the Nation?

Did Bapup not know the situation in the country? But his hands were tied in many ways. At last he showed great presence of mind and abandoned a large part of the prayers. He took up only Ramdhun. He saw that it was impossible to induce the excited crowd to keep quiet for fifteen to twenty minutes. The 'Ramdhun' brought about a sweet silence. Cheerfulness and patience replaced irritation and anger. Bapu then began his address to the crowd. He had felt the pulse of the distressed people. This was not a new experience. He did not attempt to find fault with people who had gone mad with rage. On the contrary he spoke to them with sympathy. "All leaders are fully alive to the situation in Bengal. The Congress Cabinet is at present considering the very question, and I am also preparing to go to Bengal. All of us are moved, when we read or hear the Bengal atrocities but you should all keep some patience, have some courage, and trust in God. Solid work and not mere slogans are essential on such occasions. First decide whether you want to kill or to die. Empty slogans will serve no purpose. I can only show to you the way to die, to sacrifice all that you have, not the way to kill. I have been preaching this in India for the last thirty years—in fact, since the South African days and therefore for the last fifty years." Bapu spoke to this effect. His voice showed the deep sorrow of his heart. He even referred to the Interim Government and said: "Pandit Jawaharlal, Sardar Patel and other leaders have been very much grieved at the Bengal atrocities, but leaders cannot afford to sit silent in grief. What an amount of responsibility Jawaharlal is bearing today! He carries the burden of anxiety for the entire nation. He is overburdened with work. He could not sleep till two o'clock last night. But what is the remedy? Everyone must discharge his duty. If Members of Government feel convinced that the Bengal conflagration can be put down by their sacrifice, none of them will fail to act accordingly."

Bapu then turned to the atrocities against women. While explaining that, though our sisters in Bengal might keep with them knives for self-defence if necessary, the knives would be of no avail against crowds, he said: "I have told women long ago that it is better to end one's life by poison than suffer insults. I wish our sisters become brave."

At the end, congratulating the crowd for maintaining peace, he said: "I am very grateful to you all for having given a patient hearing to me, after participating in *Randhwa*."

Ahmedabad,  
21-11-1948.

## SINCE 1915

### *Hansa Mehta*

THE first glimpse I had of Gandhiji was in December 1915 when he attended the session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay. He had returned from South Africa in the beginning of that year, and gave an account of the position of Indians in that country and the battles he had waged to improve it. He was hardly audible. Clad in his Kathiawadi dress he looked unimpressive and out of place in the midst of the frock-coated and top-hatted gentry who formed the bulk of the Congress members in those days.

Years passed. I went abroad, and as students we discussed the happenings in India. The non-cooperation movement launched by Gandhiji in 1920-21 came in for much criticism, in particular Gandhiji's appeal to students to leave colleges. Some of the students who had left colleges in India came to England to join the universities there, and we could not understand this action on their part. In 1921, I returned home and landed the very next day after the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, had reached Bombay. At Gandhiji's bidding this visit of the Prince of Wales was to be boycotted. The boycott resulted in a terrible clash in Bombay between the loyalists, mostly Parsis, and the Congress people. The Government of India was very much annoyed with Gandhiji, especially as the boycott was a great success. They wait-

ed for the Prince of Wales to leave the shores of India before they arrested Gandhiji. When the news spread about his arrest there was terrible tension in the country. I remember to have written an article later for a paper in England under the caption "Peace of the Grave!" Gandhiji was removed to the Sabarmati Jail, and people from all parts of the country poured in Ahmedabad to have a last darshan of him before he was thrown into prison or transported. I remember to have joined a batch of women from Bombay. We were taken inside the prison walls where Gandhiji was sitting. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu was there and introduced me to Gandhiji. This was the first time I met him face to face. He sat talking and laughing while all those around him looked sad and miserable. Nobody knew when we would see him again. It was a most pathetic scene. I was moved to tears and could hardly speak or reply to questions he was asking. There must have been something terribly pathetic about him, for I always felt deeply moved in his presence whenever I was with him!

In 1930 his march to Dandi made history. Every day during the march he held crowded meetings of men and women to whom he explained the meaning of his movement. It was at one of his halts in a village that he called a special meeting of women whom he wished to harness in the service of the country. He had different plans for women, and called this special meeting to explain them to those who were anxious to serve. Women from all over the country were invited. Some of us had gone from Bombay. He sat on a raised platform under a huge tree—banyan or mango tree I forget which—and we all sat round him. His face was exultant with the joy of action. He spoke for an hour asking women to take up the picketing of foreign cloth shops and of liquor shops. After his speech he invited questions in order to clarify and solve our difficulties if any. We had many questions to ask. Why boycott all foreign cloth and not British cloth only—that was a question in the minds of most of us. Gandhiji explained that our fight was for principle. Swadeshi Dharma meant encouragement of all indigenous products and boycott of foreign goods. We were asked to begin with foreign cloth first as much money was drained away from the country on this commodity. He made it very clear that to single out only British cloth was against the principle of non-violence. It expressed a desire to be vindictive which

violated the very principle of ahimsa on which our fight was based. British goods and other foreign goods came under the same category, and we should not single out British goods only. Then came questions about picketing liquor shops. How could women do it? These liquor shops were frequented by low people. They might insult women, they might attack them. How could women talk to such ruffians and persuade them not to drink? Gandhiji smiled his bewitching smile. He had a way with women and knew how to handle them. He desired women to be brave and face all these difficulties. He gave examples of women who had done heroic deeds in the past and asked us to emulate them. Did not women wish to see India free? How could they be daunted by such imaginary fears? He won in the end as usual. His persuasive powers were wonderful, and we agreed to do the picketing. I remember when we left his presence, how overcome we were at the thought of what we had promised to do!

He always attracted large crowds wherever he went. It was obvious to most of us that these men and women who came for his *darsana* came only to satisfy their religious hankering or out of curiosity. There were few among them who really understood his message or what he stood for. I wished to know how he felt about these crowds. We were travelling in the same compartment from Poona to Bombay. He had come down from Panchgani and on his way had met with such big crowds at War that it was with great difficulty that he could get away. To my question as to what he felt about this madness on the part of the people he said that he was not at all happy about it. He deplored the lack of discipline and the lack of consideration shown by the people. He confessed to the failure of the Congress to instil this very essential quality into the people. I then asked him if the Congress was not responsible for encouraging indiscipline among the young people. I told him what had happened in 1942 when even school-children were asked to leave schools and engage themselves in activities like stone-throwing etc. Gandhiji could not approve of these activities, and felt hurt at what had happened. However, he pointed out that it was not the Congress who was responsible but those persons who in the name of the Congress were carrying on such activities. He agreed that they were exploiting the name of the Congress to achieve their own end. At Kalyan where we got down there was a

large crowd waiting, and in spite of all precautions Gandhiji was nearly crushed that day and was rescued from his worshippers and admirers with great difficulty.

The last time I saw Gandhiji alive was on the day he broke his last fast, i.e. 20th January 1948. I expected to see him resting in bed after his ordeal but was very much surprised to see him sitting and spinning. He looked tired and exhausted and had to stop now and again for breath, and yet he insisted on finishing his allotted work. We all tried to persuade him to rest and put aside this self-imposed task in view of his utter exhaustion. But he was adamant. In reply to our importunities he merely smiled the smile of a naughty child as much as to say that we were wasting our breath. He propounded the theory that a man must work in order to earn his food. And since he had started taking his food that day he must also start working!

A few days later when I entered that same room again I saw him lying in bed taking his last rest. His face did not betray the violent end he had met with. It was beautifully calm and serene. After the fitful fever of life he slept well. What could one feel but moved to the very depths of one's heart in the presence of such peace, the supreme triumph of an enlightened soul!

Baroda,  
14.9.1948.

## GANDHIJI

### *Countess Mountbatten*

**I** SEND a short contribution to this new publication, although I feel much diffidence in doing so, particularly after such a short association and friendship with Gandhiji and knowing this book contains articles from many whose whole lives have been centred round him, and whose services have been entirely devoted to his ideals. I do so, however, at the direct request of Shri Chandrachudkar Shukla, also of Rajkumar Amrit Kaur, and consider it a real privilege.

My husband, my daughter and I brought away from India so many memories—of gratitude and affection for her people—of joy and pride at their newly found freedom and

fine achievements—of sorrow and distress at their sufferings and cruel disappointments—of admiration at their courage, sacrifice and true spirit of service.

But nothing will remain more vivid or valued in our minds than our all too brief contacts with Gandhiji. I will remember him above all else for his warm and natural friendliness and simplicity—his complete approachableness and deep understanding, for his uncompromising sincerity of purpose, and the touching manner in which he appeared to accept us as if he had been our friend for years. To us, also, he became in a short space of time a really close friend, and when the tragedy of his death enveloped India and the whole world, we felt it not only as a national and international calamity, but as a real personal loss, as if someone near and dear to us had suddenly been taken away.

I recall our early meetings at Viceroy's House. My husband's first act on arriving in Delhi was to sit down and write an immediate letter to Gandhiji asking him to come and give him the benefit of his advice at the earliest possible moment. He was in Bihar but came in response to this letter as soon as he could. When he first arrived my husband and I met him together and were fortunate in being able to establish immediately relations on an easy and informal basis, and I am sure we all three sensed an atmosphere of warm friendliness at our meeting. We talked of many things naturally and freely and, after I had left, my husband told me that he had spent more than two hours just gossiping with Gandhiji and discussing their respective lives. Gandhiji told him about his early days in London and South Africa and with Congress. My husband told him of his life at sea, his visit to India with the Prince of Wales in 1921, and his time in the South East Asia Command.

It was only after they had got to know each other in this way that they began to talk about the problem of the transfer of power to India.

This first visit was the forerunner of many more, and Gandhiji came often to talk with my husband—with me—with us both. I on my side ran in quite frequently to see him at the Bhambi Colony, or at Birla House, to seek his counsel, to talk on every conceivable subject, and I always came away strengthened and soothed.

I delighted in his delicious sense of humour and at the amazing and irresistible charm which was particu-

berly his. I marvelled at the way he seemed to manage to have time for everybody and everything—time to give comfort and wise counsel to whoever turned to him with problems either vital or trifling, and to people whether they came singly or in thousands. There was something about him completely lovable and disarming and with his delightful smile he radiated lightheartedness wherever he went. This came as a surprise to me, as I had thought of him as someone whom I would find serious, austere and probably overwhelming. I was prepared to be awed, and even possibly bored, while instead I was charmed and enthused and inspired.

In February, 1922, in Old Delhi, my husband and I got engaged to be married, on July 18th, 1947, in New Delhi, we celebrated the Silver Anniversary of our wedding. Very early on that morning a messenger came to me at Viceroy's House bearing a handwritten note from Gandhiji, the first message we had received on this big milestone in our lives. It read as follows—

18-5-47 N.D.

Dear Sister,

So you are celebrating the Silver Jubilee of your wedding amid a shower of congratulations and good wishes. Let me add mine to these and hope that your joint career here will blossom into citizenship of the world.

Yours sincerely,

M K GANDHI

This note touched us beyond words, and we will always treasure it as a token of his thoughtfulness, warm-hearted friendliness and generosity of spirit. How unpredictable life can be and how little did any three of us know in 1922 what the future would hold.

During Gandhiji's last fast my husband once accompanied me on a visit to Birla House, the first time they had met outside Government House—and I well remember his chuckle and delightful smile as he greeted my husband saying "It takes a fast to bring you to me!"

It was with Gandhiji's help in 1947 at the height of the tragic communal rioting in the Punjab and Delhi itself that I founded a United Council of Relief and Welfare to co-ordinate the work of all those undertaking Emergency Relief and Welfare Services. I will always feel grateful for the wise and constructive counsel he gave me, which

helped so much in making this United Council a really strong and vital body covering the widest field of work.

I much hope, as now visualised, that it will remain a permanent institution; as its value to India and further afield cannot be overestimated.

When my husband's nephew, Lt. Philip Mountbatten, got engaged to be married to Princess Elizabeth, Gandhiji was one of the first to send us and the young couple his best wishes. Further, he came round particularly to discuss what he could send them as a small wedding gift — It was finally decided that he should give something he had himself made, and we ourselves brought proudly back to England in time for the ceremony a small lace cloth made from the yarn he had himself spun. This will always remain among their most cherished possessions.

I will always treasure the memory of the friendship and confidence Gandhiji so generously gave us and derive inspiration from his magnificent courage and unparalleled service to humanity.

London,  
23-9-1948.

## WHAT I OWE TO MAHATMA GANDHI

*G. Mohanbry Naidu*

**I** WAS eight years old when Gandhiji left South Africa. I could not understand then the intricacies of politics or the meaning of the struggle which for two decades he had to wage against the authorities, but I have a very distinct recollection of the image that was stamped upon my young mind of the national hero whose name was a household word among the Indian community. I faintly realised in those early days the powers of the simple man who was to achieve in the fullness of time such miracles as even in their heyday warriors like Napoleon could only dream of. As the years went by I was able to assess the full power of the weapon of satyagraha which Gandhiji had perfected during his career as a public man in South Africa. When I reached the age of reason I began to make a deep study of the writings of Gandhiji, and although I became an adherent of his great principles little did I think that it would fall to my lot to take up the

flaming torch he had left behind. I was scarcely prepared for such a task; I did not feel inclined to be in the forefront of the struggle that began half a century ago. Yet when the call came, the response in me was instantaneous. It was the voice of Mahatma Gandhi calling for action. Without any preparation, without any experience, without the slightest hesitation, I threw myself into the battle. With faith undiminished in the righteousness of the cause we had espoused, I became, with thousands of my fellow-countrymen, a satyagrahi. I made the vow of reaching the goal that we had in view, no matter what sacrifice was demanded of us.

Two years ago when I was locked up in the prison of Newcastle, I spent my time reading *My Experiments With Truth*. I had read that book many times before, but inside the prison walls the words came to have a different meaning for me. It was in Newcastle that he started his epic march with thousands of men, women and children, and somehow I felt that I too was in the crowd that marched past across the Transvaal border in scarred ranks. I said to myself that, if only the spirit that animated our people in those days could once again be mobilized, how nearer would we all be to the goal! It was true that Mahatma Gandhi was now in India and not in South Africa, but did it really make any difference? Had we not promised to be pure satyagrahis? And whether the master was in our midst or engaged in a bigger struggle elsewhere, we had to show the mettle of our pasture. It is to the credit of the South African Indians that in 1946, when we decided to take up the challenge, Gandhiji sent his blessings from India. I knew an intense moment in the struggle when I was sent to Pietermaritzburg gaol. Thirtythree years before, this prison had the privilege of holding an august prisoner: Mahatma Gandhi. It was here that Gandhiji made a pair of sandals which he presented to General Smuts. The time for personal contact with the great leader had now arrived. I decided to fly to Wardha with Dadoo, in order to receive more precise guidance in regard to future plans.

Never before was my soul so wrapt in joy. I had come into the breach with a very warm heart, but the pleasure I felt then was of a different kind. It was the joy one feels in doing one's duty. But to be with Mahatma Gandhi was like the vision of a dream. I was not going to meet a stranger. His teachings had become part and parcel of my life. His autobiography had been

my Bible, and in my leisure time I have been reading it over and over again. Yet to meet one's hero in flesh and blood was to be such a noble experience. During my airborne voyage to Karachi and Patna and then by train to Harla in Bihar, where Bapu had proceeded to stop the rising tide of a communal conflict, how many thoughts crossed my mind? I imagined flying to those regions where live only the choicest souls of the earth. When Dadoo and I arrived at Harla station, we were told that Gandhiji was putting up in a village a few miles away. The news of our arrival had preceded us, and we heard that Bapu was waiting for us. We were to have the privilege of being in audience with him for the whole day.

We were ushered in his room by Manduk Sarabhee. Gandhiji was sitting cross-legged with the spinning wheel in front of him. It was a quiet place. It appeared that we were the only visitors of the day. We had come to meet the Father of the Indian Nation and the welcome we received was naturally that of a dear father to his affectionate children. We were in the presence of a king among men, and in an instant we felt the glamour of royalty in the house. We will never forget the warm smile which lighted upon both of us—the smile of the hero we had loved and admired for thirty years.

"Do you speak Gujarati, Naukar?" he enquired. I had to confess my ignorance of this language. "I understand your difficulties," he replied. "Besides your own Tamil you have to study English and therefore there is not much time left for other languages. Right let us now do some talking."

We gave him an account of the progress of the struggle, and were quite surprised to find that, in the midst of his multifarious activities he had found time to keep in touch with the latest developments of our satyagraha movement. Speaking for myself, he certainly knew more of South Africa and its problems than I could boast of. We discussed every phase of the struggle and at every point he intervened with observations that had the effect of illuminating the subject. Throughout our talk he kept on emphasizing the central lesson of the satyagraha movement. He asked us always to remember that non-cooperation was not the weapon of those who found a shelter in a negative attitude of life, it was a most positive action leading straight to success if the principles

were not compromised on the way. India recovered her freedom by clinging to the principles of non-violence. South African Indians, he said, would see the milky way, if they followed the example of the mother country. He also advised patience. Success never comes in a flood, he said. He was particularly glad to know that even the children in South Africa had done their part in the latest struggle. He asked us to give his blessings to all of them. The long season was coming to an end. The gentle voice of Mridula Sarabhai announced that it was the scheduled time for rest, and it was not for Bapu to say 'no'. When we took leave of him he asked us to come again after we had completed our tour in India.

When we met for the second time, after six weeks, he was the guest of Dr. Syed Mahmud in Patna. From his rooms, across the wide lawns, we could see the beautiful banks of the holy Ganges. We reached the place long after the time which is normally scheduled for visitors and interviews, but Bapu, in his great kindness, decided to see us. He was eager to know the response we had met from the various leaders in India, and he was glad to learn that everywhere we had received enthusiastic assistance. The plan of our campaign was drawn up by him personally. We were going away with his blessings, and this made our work all the more easy. He invited us to walk with him on the lawn, and while walking we gave him an account of our meetings all over India. At dusk we parted. He was good enough to enquire about our sleeping arrangements. "Will you sleep out in the open?" he asked. We answered in the affirmative. Before we separated Dadoo asked Bapu if we could attend his first prayer meeting. "Yes," he said, "if you can afford to be up at four."

We were feeling the strain of our various journeys throughout India. The climate also contributed to our fatigue. Bapu's doubt about our early rising was fully justified. We had a sound sleep, and we were only awakened by the hearty laugh of Gandhiji, when he saw us in our beds after he had finished not only the four o'clock prayer but his half an hour's walk. Leaping over our bed, he asked us in that affectionate voice, which I can scarcely describe, if we had a good sleep.

By his death, Gandhiji has come nearer to us. It is not in a spirit of mourning that we must honour the memory of the great departed. It is our pride and our

delight that he was born on Indian soil. It will be our privilege to follow his teachings. In the realization that our outlook will be informed by his ideals lies the hope of the whole Indian race. Let us strive so that his message may find practical application in the heart of all mankind.

Darwin,  
18-9-1948.

## MY FRIEND GANDHI

*Janak Obitfeld*

THE name Gandhi always touches a warm corner of my heart. It recalls one day in London, when this young, shy, diffident youth, slim and a little weakly, came to see me on the question of his diet. I was greatly struck by the story he told me how he had fallen into the hands of doctors who had told him that unless he ate meat and took beef-tea he would surely die. Gandhi related to me quite simply the contact that had gone through his soul. He told me how in India, he had with some other youths tried the experiment of tasting flesh-food to prepare before coming to England. He found, however, that the meal was so repulsive that he then decided that, coming to England, he would still hold to his faith and that nothing should induce him to break his religious vows.

Here now he was up against the problem of life and death, and when I asked him what was the end of his discussion with the doctor, he gave me quite simply the following story.

"I asked the doctor whether he was sure that I should die if I did not eat meat. He assured me, on his honour as a physician and from the experience of the whole medical profession, that people could not live in England without meat. 'Climate,' he said, 'is a matter of supreme importance, and whereas in the tropical regions people can live on grains and vegetables and fruits, in the cold climate of England the addition of beef or mutton is essential.'"

"I asked him," went on Gandhi, "to give me to the next day to think it out. He came next morning with a

cup of steaming hot beef-tea in his hand and said: "Come along, my laddie, and be sensible and drink down this strengthening food."

"I looked up into his face and said: 'Please tell me once more if it is necessary that I should do this, and that if I do not, I shall die.'

"He looked at me earnestly and said: 'You must either take beef-tea or die.'

"Well, Gandhi," I asked him, "what happened then?"

"I had to reply," said Gandhi quietly, "that if it were God's will that I should die I must die, but that I was sure that it could not be God's will that I should break the oath that I made at my mother's knee before I left India."

It is interesting here to note that within a few years this doctor was dead, that Gandhi lived on to move the world by his heroism, and that today it is becoming quite the habit of the higher classes in England to adopt a fruitarian dietary.

From that time on I saw Gandhi frequently. I got him elected on the London Vegetarian Society's Committee, and then later on we took rooms together in St. Stephen's Square, Bayswater, London, and founded the West London Food Reform Society. We spent all our spare time going out in the evenings lecturing at clubs and any other public meetings where we could obtain a hearing for our gospel of peace and health.

I well remember how we got in a number of places the opportunity of arranging a supper which consisted of lentil soup followed by boiled rice and large raisins. We called it the West London Society's banquet.

These were happy days of consciousness that we were helping to make the world better, and they formed a fine training ground in which Gandhi learnt that by quiet persistence he could do far more to change men's minds than by any oratory or loud trumpeting.

I have always felt since that the Indians coming to England have to face the same great testing examination. If they fail, they prove that they have commonplace minds and they drop into the ordinary run of English diet, English habits, and general mediocrity. If, on the other hand, they can stand firm in their faith and be prepared to die for it, they prove themselves men indeed. Upon this class of men does the mantle of Gandhi still fall and the future of India depend.

I met Gandhi again in close comradeship when he was working for the freedom of Indians in South Africa.

He became somewhat embittered by the fact that he could obtain no hearing from any of the politicians in power in England. To them the fate of a few black men was of supreme unimportance compared with the threats of the doughty Boer Government. Many a time did Gandhi repeat to me and to himself "Queen Victoria promised us membership of the British Empire, and yet Britain refuses to honour her word."

I had a number of opportunities, when I was staying in India as physician to the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, of travelling about the various States, and I met here and there my young friend Gandhi who would arrive unannounced and depart unheralded. He appeared to be known and welcomed everywhere, and passed in and out of every household where I met him as if he were a member of the family.

I never discussed with him his work in those days, and we only met upon the common ground of being lovers of the Indian people and practisers in life of the truths we both held, that it is not only inhuman but a degradation of humanity for higher castes and classes of human life to kill and eat the dead bodies of animals. Then as always he was the same quiet gentle reserved man, with the power of self-control and willingness to self-sacrifice for his ideals and aims.

The last time we met was when I took the chair for him at the public dinner that we gave him at the Dorchester Hotel, London. He was now an old man, but the same dogged spirit compelled him to be allowed to be presented to Royalty clad in his blanket. People laughed at his "loin-cloth", but Gandhi was clothed like the Master of old in one complete garment of which it was said that it was seamless from top to bottom.

As an illustration of his control over physical pain he came to me once when he was on his South African work here from a committee meeting to the writing room of the hotel and asked me if I could take out one of his teeth. I obtained a pair of forceps and he sat down and had a painful tooth extracted, and went straight back into his committee room.

Gandhi will always remain to me the type of the honest man who was in search of Truth and justice for mankind. He was indeed a type of "A good shepherd who was always out to seek and to save the wounded and down-trodden and homeless and oppressed."

Doddington,  
25-10-1948.

## INTER-RELIGIOUS CO-OPERATION

A. A. Pooni

MY first contact with Gandhiji was through correspondence. The International Fellowship was started in 1922. In 1927 I ventured to write a letter to Gandhiji explaining the object and purpose of the Fellowship in detail and requesting him to help us by becoming a member of its All-India Council. Gandhiji wrote to me a few days later agreeing to become a member of the Council. He observed that, though he had many preoccupations and would not generally join movements with which he was not connected, he would make an exception in this case.

In December 1927, he came to Madras where I was then staying. I called on him at the residence of the late Shri S. Srinivasa Iyengar whose guest he then was. On the very first day I met him, he told me that, if I wanted to have any quiet and undisturbed conversation with him, it would be better that I went to him early in the morning and accompanied him during his walk. I went to him on two successive mornings and had over an hour's conversation each day. I explained to him the purpose of the Fellowship as I understood it and as stated in its constitution. He said that the effort to bring about co-operation between the various religions was a new experiment. I stated to him the programme we had been following during the five years of its life.

During my talks with him, I raised the question of the first meeting of the All-India Council of the Fellowship, and asked him if he would kindly have them meet in Sabarmati as his guests. He readily agreed and invited the Council to meet in Sabarmati. The meeting was held from the 13th to the 17th of January, 1928. He attended some of its sessions, particularly those which discussed the religious basis of the Fellowship and its implications. The late Mr C. F. Andrews also was with us at those meetings.

It was during this visit to Sabarmati that Gandhiji asked me to address him as Bapu, and he began to call me "Rajan", my pet name.

I had been General Secretary of the Student Christian Association since 1915. Between 1922 and 1928, I was doing the work of the Fellowship in my spare time. In 1928 I felt that the time had come for me to terminate these divided loyalties. I could not be fair to either by trying to carry on both the functions at the same time. So I asked the General Committee of the S.C.A. to allow me to resign from that work. I also wrote a long letter to Gandhiji seeking his advice. He told me that it was wise and right to devote my time and energy to one or the other. I decided in favour of the Fellowship.

In October 1937, during the Congress regime, a few friends and I felt interested in the question of ensuring friendly relations between Hindus and Muslims. During and after the elections, the relationship between them had been strained. We thought that something should be done, if possible, to improve matters. I went round to a few of my Muslim friends in Madras, and asked them what they would consider as an act of gesture on the part of the Congress Government towards the Muslim community. They suggested two things.

1. That the Congress Government in Madras should set apart one lakh of rupees for educational scholarships to Muslim students.

2. That this should be on an experimental basis for one year.

After consultation with Muslim friends I sought the advice of my Hindu friends who also were happy over the suggestions made by the Muslims. The then Madras Government was approached about it, but they seemed to have some difficulty. So, on the advice of both my Hindu and Muslim friends, I went to Wardha to meet Gandhiji and place the whole matter before him. On the eve of my departure to Wardha my Muslim friends further suggested that when I met Gandhiji, I should try and persuade him to invite Mr. Jinnah for a heart-to-heart approach to the Hindu-Muslim problem. I met Gandhiji at the Sevagram Ashram soon after I reached Wardha, and told him of the mission I had come with. He asked me if I had anything in writing. On my answering in the affirmative, he asked me to hand it over to him and meet him the following afternoon, which I did.

When I went to his room the following afternoon he asked me if I was satisfied with the scheme which I was sponsoring. I said that it was not a question of my

satisfaction but that of the Muslim friends on whose behalf I was acting, and they were satisfied. Gandhiji said that he was sceptical. In the first place, he felt that the figure of one lakh of rupees per year was too small. He also considered the limitation to one year to be unsatisfactory. He thought that the amount should at least be five lakhs of rupees a year and that the experiment should continue until the disparity in education between the two communities disappeared. After some conversation we arrived at a compromise as it were, Gandhiji agreeing about the one lakh of rupees and myself accepting the five year period. He then asked me to send a detailed scheme of the distribution of the one lakh of rupees in consultation with my Muslim friends. This was sent to him later.

After disposing of this part of my mission, I raised the question of his inviting Mr. Jinnah for a personal discussion of the Hindu-Muslim relations. Gandhiji agreed about it after some discussion and he wrote to Mr. Jinnah inviting him to halt at Wardha on his way to Bombay from Delhi where Mr. Jinnah was at the time. Mr. Jinnah wrote back saying that he could not do so, since he was hurrying back to Bombay on some urgent professional business, but that he would be most happy to meet Gandhiji in Bombay at any time convenient to the latter. They eventually met in 1938.

Since 1937, I met Gandhiji twice in Madras during his visits. On the first occasion I met him with a small group of my Indian Christian friends and discussed with him the question of conversion and proselytization. As was to be expected, Gandhiji was against proselytization just as we were, but he would acquiesce in conversions, provided they took place genuinely and sincerely, which he rightly felt was not the case in most of the so-called conversions. As a result of this meeting, a few of us jointly published a statement in the press about "Conversion and Christians".

Always,

28-6-1948.

## RECOLLECTIONS

*Agnes M. Phillips*

**M**Y first recollections of Mr. Gandhi date back to 1907. At that time I was staying with my uncle, Rev. Charles Phillips in Johannesburg. One day he said that he had invited Mr. Gandhi to lunch, that he was a vegetarian, and that we must be very particular about this. As I knew practically nothing about vegetarianism at that time, I became very interested but was rather afraid of doing anything wrong. However, when Mr. Gandhi questioned me about it, luckily everything was correct. He came several times again to meals and to small gatherings at my uncle's house.

I wish I could convey my ideas about Mr. Gandhi clearly. Much to my surprise, I began to regard him as a much revered and at the same time lovable elder brother. Also, that this was no ordinary man, but a master. His simplicity and integrity were very manifest, yet they were such an integral part of him that he could not be otherwise. He made one think of the deeper things of life and religion without any apparent effort on his part. Truth and uprightness were his watchwords. His courage was beyond question. His influence was such that it was impossible to do or even to think meanly. This feeling of affection and reverence has remained with me during my life.

Later much to my family's and my horror, he was sent to prison on account of the Indian question. When he was released, my aunt and I went to the station to welcome him. He was carried from the train shoulder-high by his companions after being garlanded. I was glad to be there to offer my mate of understanding and welcome. A more tragic memory was when he was attacked and nearly killed by some misguided countrymen of his. He was looked after by the family of another Christian minister, a friend of ours, Rev. Joseph J. Doke.

In 1909 I came back to England to train as a nurse at Guy's Hospital. During that year Mrs. Polak wrote me to say that Mr. Gandhi would shortly be in England. I went to see him at the Westminster Palace Hotel, where

he had a room. He welcomed me warmly, and asked me to sit down, as he had ordered tea for me. There were unnumerable people in and out to see him, but in between while he found time for a little conversation with me. It was eventually arranged that I should go to him on Wednesday afternoons, during my off-duty time. He was always very busy and inundated with visitors.

One Wednesday I felt that my visit must interfere with his work, so I did not go. Next morning I had a letter from him asking why I had not done so. This astonished me very much, as I had really thought that he would not miss me in the throng and bustle. I resumed my visits.

The year 1914 came, and with it the war. Mr. Gandhi had come to England two days after it was declared. Although very poorly at that time, he organized a Red Cross Corps of young Indians from the Universities and elsewhere. In November, I was drafted out to France on nursing service. The evening before my departure I went to say good-bye to Mr. Gandhi. He was on a bed of sickness, with Mrs. Gandhi looking after him. During my visit, a young student came in. Mr. Gandhi told him that some of the details were not being carried out properly in the Corps, and asked him to see that this was remedied. One realized that with Mr. Gandhi a thing worth doing was worth doing well.

I did not see him again until he came over for the Round Table Conference. The first time, only for a few minutes, was at the Friends House meeting. I went with Mrs. Polak to say good-bye to him. It had been a very memorable meeting. The rooms were very crowded. So many people had come to say good-night. He must have been very tired, but when my turn came to greet him, he quickly looked up, pulled me down to the floor where he was sitting, gave me a clap on the face, and chatted for a few minutes. One of the Indians present came to me afterwards and said that he was very envious that I had had a clap on the face from Mr. Gandhi.

On another occasion, not long before he left for India, I went with Mrs. Polak to the 5 o'clock prayers. Mr. Gandhi asked Mrs. Polak if she would start the hymn, "Lead, kindly Light" after prayers. This she did, and we all joined in the singing of this beautiful hymn. That was the last time that I saw Mr. Gandhi.

During the 1939 war, a soldier who was going out to India told me that he would much like to meet Mr. Gandhi. I gave him a letter of introduction. Owing to illness, he was not able to meet him, but sent on my letter. Later I received a letter from Mr. Gandhi, which bore my name and his signature in his own handwriting. I still have that letter and regard it as one of my most cherished possessions.

Sreagram  
Via Wardha (C. P.)  
11-2-48

Dear Agnes,

It was good to have a letter from you after such a long time.

The friend to whom you gave your note has not yet turned up. He has been informed that he can come and see me. My doubts you should follow from the papers.

There is strictly a line to tell you that my love does not suffer because I do not hear from you, or because you are so far away from me.

Love,

Yours,  
M. K. Gandhi

Folkstone,  
8-11-1948

## GANDHIJI AT SANTINIKETAN

*Krishnachand Sen*

**I**T is our great good fortune that Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath, the poet-prophet, have been contemporaries, whose complementary contributions make up so large a part of our modern heritage. This concurrence is, however, nothing unusual in the long story of our race. We find such figures as Shri Ramachandra, Vasushtha and Vishvamitra in the days of the Ramayana, and Maharshi Vidura, Brahmarsi Bhishma, and Parashottama Krishna in the age of the Mahabharata.

An analogy might help us to understand this better. When we look at the sky with our unaided eyes it seems as though there is but a solitary sun. Yet astronomers who fathom the mysteries of the skyey ranges well know that the suns in their courses, each lord of its own system, create and conform to the music of the spheres. But men of narrow outlook are naturally deprived of this

synoptic vision, which is indeed the truth-vision or *saigodrakshi*. The rhythms of the mighty world-play remain ever unrevealed to the gaze of the ignorant and the bigoted. To know greatness one has to be great oneself.

Thus it is that some of Rabindranath's devotees fail to see the greatness of Gandhi, while among the followers of the Mahatma are men who are blind to the Illumination that was Rabindranath. Different as their *sadhaks* and chosen fields of activity have been, it is not difficult to find their essential unity, the unity of purpose and idealism which animated these two seekers of beauty and truth. Gandhi and Rabindranath have helped to free us from many a bond of passion and prejudice. Their creative personalities have wonderfully opened up the sources of our own latent energies, pointed out the path of self-expression that is to be found in acts of service and sacrifice. They have brought home to us, once again, the idealism that is dynamic, integral, practical and above all universal. It is because of this underlying unity that, in spite of occasional differences, they could realize and acknowledge each other's greatness and specific contribution to the life of the nation. It is not without some significance that it was Rabindranath who had thought of the title "Mahatma", while it was Gandhi who gave currency to the epithet "Gurudev"

Both of these *sadhaks*—for that indeed is how we must look at their genius—were Indian through and through. Yet he who acted as a bridge between the two was an Englishman, the late C. F. Andrews. The fact needs a little explanation.

In May, 1912—before the publication of the English *Gitanjali* and the award of the Nobel Prize—Rabindranath had been to England for medical treatment. At that time some translations from the original Bengali poems had roused a thrill of excitement and admiration among a small circle of friends and literary men. Rothstein, painter and man of letters, was intimate with the poet; and it was in his house, at Hampstead Heath, that arrangements could be made for recitals from Tagore. The audience included such figures as Ezra Pound, Alice Meynell, Charles Trevelyan, Henry Newinson, May Sinclair, Ernest Rhys and others. Yeats had taken upon himself the task of reading out the translations. It was to one of these meetings that C. F. Andrews, who was then connected with the Cambridge Brotherhood, came to hear the

Poet. Gradually the Poet and Andrews were drawn towards each other, and two years later Andrews, along with Pearson, came to live at Santiniketan. Of Andrews' association with Rabindranath and Santiniketan we cannot speak now. Here we will only refer to his most outstanding work in bringing together Gandhiji and Rabindranath.

Andrews had come to Santiniketan which he had chosen as his home, but he was also a friend of Gandhiji. At that time we used to read in the papers of the work that Gandhiji was doing for his countrymen in South Africa. And as we listened to Andrews speaking from personal experience of that work and of the sublime simplicity of Gandhiji we at once felt a stir of sympathy and admiration for this soldier of the spirit, the lonely fighter in the cause of truth and non-violence and of human justice. It was then that we learnt that he was coming to India to undertake work in the political field. And his arrival, as history has proved, was to be a turning point in our national struggle.

One day in the course of conversation Andrews told the poet about Gandhiji's difficulties with regard to the Phoenix School, his educational experiment in South Africa. On the one hand it was not possible for him to come away and leave the School behind; on the other, he did not know where, on arrival, to locate it for he had not yet decided where he would stay in India.

When Rabindranath heard this from Andrews he made a characteristic gesture. He at once invited the entire School to Santiniketan. It was decided that till the time a suitable place was found for it the School, with its teachers and students, would be the guests of Santiniketan, where they would at the same time carry on their normal educational activities. Gandhiji felt highly pleased at the suggestion, and the teachers and students of the Phoenix School came to Santiniketan in the beginning of the year 1915. Prior to this they had stayed at Kangri Gurukul for a short time. After a few days of the party's arrival the poet had to go out of station on some important work. And it was on the 17th of February, 1915, when the Poet was away from the Ashram, that Gandhiji and his wife reached Santiniketan 'without proper notice', so to speak. On learning of Gandhiji's arrival the Poet made a hurried return, but Gandhiji in the meantime had to go to Poona owing to the

death of Shri Gokhale, and unable to wait for the Post, he had gone away from Santiniketan! But he came back to Santiniketan on the 6th of March, in order to meet the Post.

This time we arranged a great ovation, for during his first visit we had perforce not been able to give him any kind of special welcome. Twentytwo arches were erected, with such traditional and auspicious symbols as *sanki-pradha-shals-dhaya* (earth-perfume-stone-slab-corn) etc. The festival area was replete with alponas (मणिर), altars and floral decorations, all done by our students. What with the chanting of Vedic mantras and songs and what with the Tantric ornaments, the entire arrangement was redolent of the spirit of the true beauty and benediction of India. Everything was said in the expressive and intrinsically oriental medium of Tantric mantras and *chakras* or suggestive linear drawings. In the welcome we did not use words at all. In India it has always been considered bad form to express deep emotion—such as love or devotion—directly or in words. It is unfortunate that our action of the debased forms of the great discipline of the Tantras should blind us to the wonderfully adequate symbols of Tantricism, symbols whose reticence is packed with profound emotional suggestions. Gandhiji fully approved our experiment, specially when the inner significance of the symbols was explained to him. He was pleased not because the decorations formed part of a reception given in his honour but because they were essentially Indian and had such beautiful possibilities of spiritual depth and suggestion.

Gandhiji and his family stayed in Santiniketan for some time. During this period the two 'kuns of consciousness', Rabindranath and Gandhiji, came together and had many an interesting exchange of ideas. If anyone publishes a record of these conversations, it will form a unique record. Gradually Gandhiji became one of 'our own men', and we began to look upon him as an Elder of Santiniketan.

During his stay at Santiniketan, Gandhiji often loved to sit with Gurudeva's eldest brother Dwijendranath (Baro-dada). One afternoon on the theme of the *Gita* the two had some interesting discussion. The conversation had centred round the statement सर्वं कुरु (3.35). Dvijendranath said that it would be a mistake to interpret the word *kuru* in a narrow, limited sense. *Kuru*

really stood for the innermost *dharma* or the law of one's inner being. It was not an obligation imposed from the outside, it was not a religion of slavery but of freedom. Nor, on the contrary, should such passions as anger and attachment be confused with this *swa*. These passions are really enemies at home, to conquer rather than to serve which will be one's *swadharma*. "We want freedom," said Dwijendranath. "Of course freedom is universally desirable. But is this *swadharma* going to be only a taking over of the English word 'independence'?" The *swarājya* of which our *śāhkas* speak is, I think, a better word and a better notion. We can have our true empire of the self only when outer obstacles as well as the inner *asras* such as anger and attachment have been fully conquered. This unique superiority or self-mastery is man's real triumph and the meaning of this existence *सर्वं कृतं सर्वं स्वस्वतन्त्रित्वं प्रति* (Kaushika, Bra. 4.20). Without *swarājya* man cannot truly express himself, and unless we are able rightly to express what we are, we do not qualify for *swarājya*. Therefore it is that the Upanishads declare that *svatā*, the empire of self, is also *swapradāha*, self-expression."

To this Gandhi replied: "I quite agree with you that life without expression in work and *tapasya* is cheated of its meaning. Everyone who has expressed himself according to the religion of his soul has helped us in our march towards freedom. Thus it is that Vyasa-Yamaka-Kalidasa are all *śāhkas* of our *swarājya* so are Tula and Kabir, the scientist Jagdishchandra Bose and the Poet Rabindranath. They are all 'our own men'."

Dwijendranath said: "You are many years younger than I am. I am now old. I tell you that I see in my vision this *swarājya* coming to India. Your aspirations and *tapasya* will be fulfilled. But, alas! I shall not live to see that glorious time."

"*Swarājya* will come," Gandhi said. "We will win against our foreign opponents but unless we can overcome the more formidable enemies like greed and attachment, we shall remain slaves for ever in spite of all our political independence. It is here that men like you must work and teach us to know and achieve this self-conquest."

The two sat silent for long, gazing at the beyond. Suddenly drawing a deep sigh Dwijendranath spoke

\* Literally, under the control of the self, that is, controlled by the self.

'योगस्य कुरु कर्मणि सः सः परमा पश्यति' (Gita 2, 46) "Fixed in Yoga do thy action having abandoned attachment."

Gandhiji too, his voice laden with melancholy, said, 'कर्मयोगोपायस्यै ना कर्तुं वदानम् ।' (Gita 2, 47) "Thou hast a right to action, but only to action, not to its fruits. What profit can there be in thinking, in vain, of the result of what we do?"

In the deepening gloom the two figures sat there, motionless and meditating. There were tears in their eyes. Why? What ailed their sensitive spirit? When the masters weep it is bad omen, presaging doom and disaster. Is it that in their supernal vision they had foreseen the sorrows of our unhappy era? Did they anticipate the agony and frustration, the confusion and convulsion of a purely politicalized independence sans idealism and sans Indianism? Who shall tell?

Santiniketan  
4-10-1948

## MEETING GANDHIJI

*Nellie Sen-Gupta*

**I** MET Gandhiji for the first time at the house of my relative, Shri S. R. Das, at Hungerford Street, Calcutta, on his return from South Africa. Kasturba was also with him. In later days I had occasion to see him quite frequently. I remember once during the days of the non-cooperation movement, I went to see him in a frock made of English cloth. He asked me why I was not putting on khaddar. I replied, "I am wearing a frock." He immediately said, "If you feel more comfortable in a frock, then have it made of khaddar."

After the demise of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Mahatman came to Calcutta and stayed here for many days. I used to meet him at Deshbandhu's house at 144, Russa Road, with my husband, where Gandhiji kept himself busy throughout the day and till late at night in collecting funds for Deshbandhu Memorial. But for him there would not be the Chittaranjan Seva Sadan, one of the most useful institutions that we now have at Calcutta.

My husband was put up by him as a candidate for the three honours held by the great Deshbandhu, namely

Presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, Presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Swaraj Party, and the Mayoralty of Calcutta. My husband's political rivals once told Mahatmaj that they did not like Mr. Sen-Gupta's mixing so freely and intimately with the members of the Calcutta Club and his joining all functions of the Club which were carried on mostly in European fashion. Gandhiji laughed and said, "I wish I was a member of the Calcutta Club whose members, I know, are all decent people." The Europeans, again, opposed Mr. Sen-Gupta's election as the head of the city's civic administration, because he was an extremist Congress leader. Gandhiji addressed the members of the European Association, and asked them not to worry but to have confidence in Mr. Sen-Gupta. He assured them that, if they supported the good programme of the Congress Municipal Association, they would find in Mr. Sen-Gupta a very sincere friend of all.

I met Gandhiji several times at different sessions of the Indian National Congress. I particularly remember the time when he was attending the Lahore session of the Congress. We used to visit him at his camp. On one occasion it was bitterly cold, and he was clad in his usual light fashion. My husband told him that he would catch cold if he was not more warmly clad. But he said, "Oh no, I shall not catch cold." The next day when my husband visited him, Gandhiji was suffering from a very bad cold, and naturally my husband said to him, "I told you, Mahatmaj, that you would catch cold." To this Mahatmaj replied, "Sen-Gupta, I have not caught cold through lack of clothing, but because I was greedy and ate too much."

When Gandhiji attended the Round Table Conference in London in 1931, my husband went to London at his instance to tell the British public what dreadful atrocities were perpetrated on the innocent people of Chittagong and on the Bengali revolutionaries, particularly those who were shot dead and injured by British soldiers and police inside the High and Bakshi Jails. One day when my husband was very unwell, Gandhiji needed to see him. He would not allow my husband to go to him, but came to our hotel himself carrying his lunch of black grapes and other fruits to eat while he talked. Although no one had known of his coming, there was quickly a crowd outside the hotel. My great regret was that on that week-end my mother had not come up to London and so missed the pleasure of meeting him.

My husband passed away in detention in 1933 on his return from England, and Mahatma came to Calcutta sometime later. He very kindly came to our Jhowalla House at Calcutta to see my children and myself at 5 o'clock in the morning—the only free time he had.

I saw him again in Bombay in 1942, the night before the arrest of all the leaders when it was arranged that there would be a talk on the future programme of the Congress. I went to Birla House next morning only to find that Gandhi and all other leaders had been arrested.

I saw him again at Sodepore, near Calcutta, when he was on his way to Noakhali. He asked me incidentally if I could read and write Bengali. I said that I could speak Bengali, but could not read or write it. He said "This is bad. You must learn at once." I told him that I was too old then to learn, whereupon he laughed and said "You are young compared with me. I am learning Bengali now. I have made very rapid progress."

We all know Gandhi's great sense of humour. At one time he wanted to cut down all allowances and salaries of managers and officials to five hundred rupees only, whatever their responsibilities were. He felt it was an ample amount of money. My husband argued strongly for a long time, saying that it would be most difficult for people who had been used to spending much more, with wages in England and other heavy expenses, to manage if their income was so suddenly cut down to such a small amount, and that it might lead people to taking recourse to corruption. Gandhi, with that sweet smile of his, said "Well, Jasim, you have put your case well. When this is put into law I shall give a special consideration to you and shall allow you twentyfive rupees more per month!" My husband could not help laughing.

I have always felt extremely glad that I had to pay a surprise visit to Delhi in October last. Gandhi, with his usual courtesy and kindness gave a patient hearing to all our troubles in Chittagong. I of course could never imagine at the moment that it would be the last time I would have the pleasure of seeing the great man.

Calcutta

31-10-1948

## HOW COUNCIL PROGRAMME CAME IN

Chandrasekhar Shukla

**A**FTER his unconditional release from prison in August 1933, Gandhaji spent several days in exchanging thoughts with co-workers, "in order to remove the fog that envelops me today", as he put it in a letter to Shri A. Rangaswami Iyengar whom he invited to Poona for "an exhaustive conversation". In a reply (dated 30th August, 1933) to a long letter from Shri Srinivasa Sastry he thus described the working of his own mind and his reactions to the criticisms of friends like his esteemed correspondent:

"Now for the central point of your letter. I quite agree with you that I am wholly unfit for the constitution-building at the present stage. In my opinion, that stage is not yet. It will come only when the nation has developed a sanction for itself. I would, therefore, gladly retire from the Congress and devote myself to the development of civil disobedience outside the Congress and Harpur work. The difficulty is, how to do it? Can I do it by seceding from the Congress? Will that be right? That was the question that troubled me at the time of the informal conference," and that is the question that confronts me again. I am seeking light. As soon as I have regained sufficient strength I shall again sound the mind of Congressmen, and if I can possibly retire from the Congress, I shall gladly do so. My impression, however, is that the Congress mentality has not yet changed. Whilst it is true that a large number of Congressmen have got tired, very few would care to subscribe to the White Paper or work for securing certain improvements in it. They want a radical change. But I am in no hurry to come to a final decision. I can give you the assurance that nothing will deter me from taking any step that might be in the best interest of the nation. There is no question even of self-effacement. Performance of duty I have always held to be 'a thing of beauty and a joy for ever'. The awful fact, however, has often been to know whose duty lies."

Just about this time, a prominent Liberal leader saw both Gandhiji and the Viceroy in a well-meaning effort to end, if possible, the deadlock between the Congress and the Government, but his effort was not rewarded with success. Gandhiji said in a letter, dated 7th September, 1933, to Mr. H. K. Hayles, a British M. P. who was then touring in India: "I can only tell you that I am trying my utmost

\* Held at Poona in July, 1933, under the presidency of Shri. V. D. Sastry who was then the Acting President of the Congress.

to find out the ways and means of securing an honourable peace. I assure you that I have no desire to court imprisonment for the sake of it, but if imprisonment comes in my way, even whilst I am seeking peace, I accept it cheerfully." A little earlier, on the 2nd of that month, he had written to an Indian correspondent "I can only tell you that I have in me no hatred towards the British or any person or persons, nor have I preached hatred. On the contrary I have preached non-violent resistance in the place of violent resistance."

During his stay at Wardha from the 24th of September to the 7th of November, and later at all important centres in the course of the Harijan tour, he had heart-to-heart talks with Congress workers in which the political situation was discussed without reserve on either side.\* Shri A. Kalkware Rao and Shri M. Bapineedu, prominent Congressmen from Andhra, who had three long talks with Gandhiji, issued a statement at the end of these, in terms approved by Gandhiji, in the course of which they said

"We found that his fixed opinion was that no one who had faith in civil resistance would be justified in postponing his civil resistance or giving it up for the sake of Harijan service. . . We asked him whether there was any warrant for the news, invented by some people, that he was carrying on negotiations for peace; he emphatically denied it, and added that we were free to declare that, whilst he was most eager for peace, he saw no sign whatsoever for peace coming. While Congressmen showed weakness or vacillation, honourable peace, he added, would never come."

At this time he got a letter from a civil resistance prisoner in High (Bengal) referring to trouble having arisen between prisoners and jail officials over the latter's insistence on a particular mode of salutation. Gandhiji wrote to the Governor of Bengal who issued orders for the substitution of "good morning" for the irksome "sarkar-*alam*".

In the beginning of the year 1934, while we were in Malabar, reports appeared in the *Hindis* of the repression going on in Midnapore (Bengal). Gandhiji was very much disturbed over these, and said to Shri Shankarlal Banker at Tiruvandur on the 21st of January. "I feel like giving a notice to the Government and going back to jail." He said "This is a downright humiliation of the whole

\* A full record of most of these talks, kept for use at the time, appears in the two books—*Conversations of Gandhiji* (published in 1934), and *After Conversations of Gandhiji* (the second in 1935)—published by Ward & Co., Bombay. I mention, therefore, repeating their contents here.—S. S.

people, so that they cannot raise their voice or head. It is a scientific edition of terrorism, and seeks to kill the soul of the people." He regretted the absence of public protest in Bengal, and wrote to several friends in that province pouring out the agony of his soul. "Do I see cowardice where there is none?" he wrote in the course of a letter to Gurudeva who replied to say that he had just written an article for the *Modern Review* on the subject. At this very time occurred the terrific earthquake in Bihar. In a letter written to Mr. Andrews from Tuticorin on January 25th Gandhiji said he had followed enough of the desolation on one hand by Nature and on the other by man's greed of wealth and power. "The two things more than fill my thoughts today, and I am constantly seeking God's guidance."

He had been subconsciously feeling for some time past that he should no longer stand in the way of those Congressmen who were eager to carry on some sort of corporate political activity in councils and outside. During his tour in the earthquake-affected areas of Bihar he wrote an encouraging letter to Shri M. S. Anand which seemed to many to clear the air. Dr. Anand called a small conference of Congress leaders at Delhi on 31st March, primarily to explore the possibility of corporate constructive work through an organisation like the Swaraj Party (because Congress organisations were then under a ban and could not function). While however, the leaders were on their way to Delhi, Dr. Anand learnt from official sources of the Government of India's decision to hold fresh elections for the Central Legislative Assembly later in the year. This presented quite a new situation to the conference, and the leaders tentatively prepared, on the second day of their meeting, a draft resolution to revive the Swaraj Party. I happened to be in Delhi, on my way to Bihar to rejoin Gandhiji's personal staff after a short leave, and had an opportunity to attend the conference for a while on the second day, in Dr. Anand's drawing room, through the good offices of Shri Devadas Gandhi. Shri Bhalabhai Desai suggested that the resolution should be published only if Gandhiji assented to it. "For," said he, "he is greater than all of us put together." Shri K. M. Munshi, speaking next, unequivocally declared "I shall associate myself with this move only if it has Gandhiji's blessings, otherwise I shall be out of it." Drs. Anand and Bidhan Roy assured the meeting that they fully concurred in the views just expressed; and, though the resolution was tentatively adopted, it was decided that Dr. Anand,

Shri Bhaishabhai, and Dr. Roy should see Gandhiji at Patna where he was due to arrive on the 4th, and that the resolution should be published only if and when it had his whole-hearted approval.

I left Delhi next morning and reached Monghyr at noon the following day. There was here a surprise in store for me, for no sooner did I reach the camp on the outskirts of the devastated town than a draft statement was shown to me which Gandhiji had written at Saharsa, a village in Bihar, on the silence day, i.e. the 2nd of April, and in which he had advised the resumption of Congress civil disobedience to himself alone. I mention this fact here particularly to show that neither Gandhiji nor the leaders assembled at Delhi had any knowledge of the move contemplated at the other end, and it was only by chance that the two decisions coincided. A little after my arrival I met Gandhiji, described to him the scene I had witnessed at Delhi and told him of the coming visit of the three leaders to Patna. The proposed interview took place on the night of the 4th, and continued the next day, with most satisfactory results. These conversations have been fully reproduced by me in the volume, *Conversations of Gandhiji*.

The subsequent events are known to the world. At Ranchi on May 2 and 3, the constitution of the Swaraj Party was formally adopted; and the leaders dispersed, to meet again at Patna for the meeting of the A. I. C. C. to be held there on the 18th and 19th of that month.

During the interval between the interviews at Patna and the release of the statement re civil disobedience on April 7, and the A. I. C. C. meeting in May, Gandhiji wrote to several co-workers explaining the need for, and the implications of, the two decisions. Here I will refer only to the decision re councils, because the other decision demands a chapter by itself. He wrote to Rajya from Gauhati on 14th April "A parliamentary party is as inevitable as a khaddar party or prohibition party. All parliamentarians won't be of the same hue in the Congress. It may be, indeed it is certain, there will be Congressmen fighting Congressmen on different policies. We shall have to do our part in shaping the policy of Congress parliamentarians." To Shri Jawaharlal Nehru he wrote on the same day "You must have seen my two decisions. That they are simultaneous is a mere coincidence. The revival of the Swaraj Party is a right step. There is no doubt that we have in the Congress a body of men who believe in

council entry and who will do nothing else if they cannot have their programme. Their ambition must be satisfied." And to Shri Satish Chandra Desgupta, also on the same day: "The council entry decision is sound. We must have a parliamentary party of Congressmen and perhaps part of the Congress machinery when the latter can function legally. Now that Congressmen will act as councilwallahs, things will presently shape themselves. We must mount to truth through mistakes."

In the course of a Gujarati letter to Shri K. M. Munshi dated 18th April, Gandhiji explained his attitude at some length and said:

"I share your fears as regard to council entry. In fact I have some other fears too. Nevertheless I believe that the thing has come to stay. The Congress will always have a group holding these views. I have come to believe that it is impossible and improper to disregard its existence. I do therefore propose to help to the utmost extent possible in the development of this wing. . . . We can hope to gain something through the councils, provided firm, efficient, selfless and sacrificing men and women come forward to enter the councils. The democracy of my conception is of a totally different character. It can be shaped not in, but outside, the councils. After it acquires a definite shape, the councils will follow its pattern, whereas at present democracy is everywhere dragged after the councils and becomes a failure. I want councils which will follow public opinion. The atmosphere, I see, is not just now ready for it. I am, however, of opinion that it is getting ready. . .

Council entry will be, like civil disobedience and constructive programme, an integral part of the Congress activities. It will not be treated as a step-child. I do not, however, know how far I shall be able to participate in it. Constructive work is akin to civil disobedience, and I see my way clearly through it. I have been drawn to council entry solely by the affection of friends and the present-day atmosphere. I do not possess any qualifications for this activity such as I consider myself to possess for the other two. Let us now see how things shape themselves."

There was a section among Congressmen who wished the council work to be done directly by the Congress. Shri Rajaji, voicing their opinion, wrote to Gandhiji on 21st April from Delhi.

"The parliamentary programme should be done in the name of the Congress and through Congress machinery, and not in the name of a separate party affiliated to the Congress. I am glad to find from your last letter that your inclination also is towards the

A. I. C. C. adopting the parliamentary programme and placing the Congress machinery at the disposal of such programme."

This could not be done at Ranchi. Between the Ranchi and Patna meetings, however, this view gathered momentum. On the day in the evening of which Gandhiji was to arrive from Orissa for the A. I. C. C. meeting, at the suggestion of Shri Munshi who had an opportunity to meet Shri Malaviyaji at Banaras the day before, I went from Patna to Kail, 90 miles away, and, joining Gandhiji, acquainted him with Malaviyaji's views which were in line with those expressed by Rajaji earlier. That night the Working Committee passed a resolution, with the full concurrence of the Swaraj Party leaders, to adopt the counsel programme and to appoint a Parliamentary Board with Malaviyaji as its chairman.

The Parliamentary Board thus formed held its first meeting at Bombay on 14th June at which Gandhiji was requested to be present. The question of the so-called 'Communal Award' (which, as Gandhiji could see later, was the British Government's 'decision' and in no sense an 'award') came up for discussion and threatened a crisis in the parliamentary wing. (I had the privilege, as Gandhiji's secretary, to be allowed to be present, as a silent witness, throughout these momentous discussions.) The group of Muslim members led by Messrs Sherwani, Asaf Ali and Khaliquzzaman, felt that Congress Muslims could not hope to face a Muslim electorate if the Congress rejected the 'award'. Shri Malaviyaji and Shri Aney, on the other hand, were equally emphatic in their view that the Congress could not but reject the award. Arguments went on for two days with the utmost courtesy on either side, but the differences showed no signs of being resolved. On the third day, even while the discussion was proceeding, Gandhiji was, as if in a flash, reminded of the resolution passed at Lahore assuring all communities that the Congress would accept no solution of the communal problem that was unacceptable to any of the major communities of India. He seized upon this idea and produced the formula of neither acceptance nor rejection. The resolution framed by the Board was next day, i.e. on 17th June, adopted by the Working Committee. The most important part of it runs as follows:

"The Congress claims to represent equally all the communities comprising the Indian nation. Therefore, in view of the division of opinion, the Congress can neither accept nor reject the Communal Award as long as the division of opinion lasts."

Malaviyaji and Shri Aney had expressed their opposition to the resolution in no uncertain terms both at the Board and at the Working Committee.

Early next morning Maulana Azad, Dr. B. C. Roy, and Shri Jinnah, who was then the Acting President of the Congress, came in a group to Gandhiji and informed him of the reported intention of Shri Malaviyaji and Shri Aney to resign as a protest against the resolution. Gandhiji asked the three to see both the leaders and try to dissuade them from the proposed course. Gandhiji, who was silent, gave them two notes to be delivered to Shri Malaviyaji and Shri Aney. The note to the former was in Hindi and ran as follows:

आर्जुनदेव

बलबल्लभजीके आखिरी वक्त तुमका मुझसे क्या कुछ हुआ है। सबेरे जीवनभरमें जो आखिरी वक्त नहीं बिता है वह सब सब कैसे बीते ' तो ही नहीं लम्बा है। इतनी बात जेहे। बलजी मुझे। बीते परिणाम कुछ नहीं आ सकता है। आप कुछ बोलें। सब ही कैसे बीते।

आखिरी

मोहनदास

To Shri Aney he wrote:

Dear Begun Aney,

You dare not resign. And in any case not without a proper fight with me. I would undertake to prove to you that by remaining in both the Committees you will do no violence to your principle.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

At about 10-30 a.m. the three leaders came back to report to Gandhiji that Malaviyaji and Shri Aney were not prepared to withdraw their resignations. Gandhiji, who as mentioned above was silent, wrote: "It is painful, but if it must happen, it must be endured. The Congress will survive the shock."

Dr. Roy, however, argued that it was not advisable to fight against these leaders in the elections, for it would give rise to bitterness. He therefore pleaded for the retention of the Parliamentary Board and the giving up of the elections. His two companions supported his view. Gandhiji remained unconvinced, and wrote again:

"I am quite clear in my mind that the elections must be faced. Such a big organization like the Congress cannot allow its fate to be decided by purely personal considerations. I anticipate no

unswerving results, if we regulate our work carefully, calmly and honestly."

After hearing some further arguments Gandhiji wrote, this time in Hindi:

"येस सिद्ध है कि अब और कुछ भी नहीं कहा है। अब हमारे पास दो ही रास्ता है। जि विचार, जब मैं नहीं किया करते हूँ। कुछ भी हो, हम सब कोशिशें करेंगे नहीं करते हैं।"

Shri Bhulabhai Desai, who had just dropped in, strongly supported the plea of the other three leaders. After a while Gandhiji wrote in English to the following effect:

"You, the members of the Parliamentary Board, who are here (in Bombay) may meet once again, and if you arrive at the conclusion that if these two resignations stand it would be impossible to proceed with the election work, you may advise the Working Committee accordingly. I am firm in my opinion expressed to you, but it has no value, because I have not to run the elections."

The Parliamentary Board met again that afternoon (the 18th), at which both Shri Mulaviyaji and Shri Aney were present by request, and even though their resignations had been published in the papers, they were good enough to yield to Gandhiji's pressure and to withdraw their resignations, and to join in exploring the possibilities of effecting a compromise between the two divergent schools of thought.

At this meeting Gandhiji expressed his opposition to the idea of sending a deputation to Britain to urge the British Government to alter the terms of the Award. "I would go a hundred times on bended knees to the Muslims who are our countrymen and brethren, but I would not go even once to the British Government with a request of this nature."

At Karachi, a few days later, a Muslim leader saw Gandhiji and expressed his elation over the Bombay resolution re: the Award. "Let it go on, Mahatmaji, for ten years, then we shall see!" Explaining to him the reference to the Constituent Assembly in the resolution, Gandhiji said:

"The Congress undoubtedly is representative of the country, but the Government do not accept it as such. We have therefore said that a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage should frame the constitution. This proposal ought to be acceptable, it will have to be accepted some day, or rather when

there is an agreement between the two, or when we may defeat them. In the struggle of satyagraha, however, there is no defeat or victory. Though we use these terms in common parlance, there is in fact nothing like defeat or victory in satyagraha. The other alternative is violence, which will come despite our wishes, if Fate so wills it. The Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage should be acceptable to all parties. Had Jawahar been out, he would have insisted on the acceptance of the C. A. by the Congress. Therefore I placed the proposal before the Working Committee who adopted it. If the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs combine, their demand would be unreasonable. I was told some time back that the Muslims had no objection against joint electorate, provided they were accompanied by adult franchise. Nevertheless in this resolution separate electorates have been conceded even though adult franchise has been provided for. Even if the proposal leads to no tangible result, the people will at least get some political education. The Constituent Assembly will be free to decide for British connection, monarchy, republic, federation or what not. This C. A. will not cover the States but will be restricted to British India. We may compel the Princes to come in, if we wish to usurp the States, but we have no such design on them. The Princes are free to come in if they like, but this won't happen today. If this demand for the C. A. is not conceded by the British Government, the world will know that they are not going to give up possession of the country despite the people's unanimous demand.'

As the date for the Banaras meeting drew nearer, Gandhaji wrote the following letter to Shri Bapuji Aney.

"The moving train is responsible for making my bad writing worse.

Neither Mahadevji nor you have sent me any suggestions for removing your difficulty. I have been toying myself for a solution. The more I think about it, the clearer I become that the Working Committee resolution is faultless. Non-committal is the only position the Congress can take up. We must not touch the communal ball. The more we touch it, the worse it becomes. In my opinion it is a fatal blunder to turn our attention from the White Paper. If the reforms are not killed, the Award will stand in spite of agitation. The reforms can be killed by sustained effort. But I heard you say that the Award was worse than the reforms."

The Banaras meeting of the Working Committee brought no agreement, and the two leaders' resignations became effective. They later started the Nationalist Party.

Every effort was nevertheless made to avoid bitterness, as will be shown by the following letter addressed by Gandhaji from the Congress Camp at Bombay on the

20th of October that year to Vir Vamanrao, the Congress leader in Berar:

"Congress should not on any account vote for non-Congress candidates, much less against Bapu Aney in spite of his unfortunate anti-Congress attitude on the communal award. I call it anti-Congress in the sense that it is against the declared policy of the Congress on the question. I therefore suggest that Congressmen should unreservedly vote for Bapu Aney as opposed to the non-Congress candidates. But Congressmen ought to make it clear that they do not in any way by their vote identify themselves with Sri Aney's attitude on the communal award."

Baroda,  
9-10-1930.

## HOW HE TAUGHT THROUGH LETTERS

*Margarete Spiegel*

SINCE a very young age I was interested in India. Living in Germany during the first World War, I was drawn towards pacifism. Rabindranath Tagore was my favourite author. Through Romain Rolland's book I came to know of Gandhiji, and then read all the books by and about him which were available in the State Library at Berlin, where I was a teacher at a Government college. In Germany there used to be no prescribed text-books for higher classes, so I chose a German school-edition of Gandhiji's speeches and writings for a class I was preparing in English for the University entrance examination. In order to study the Gandhi movement I got leave to visit India for two months in 1932. After travelling over several parts of India I stayed as a guest at the Sabarmati Ashram for three days, taking part in all Ashram activities. In December 1932 I saw Gandhiji for the first time sitting under a mango tree in the Yerwada jail. He scolded me for having given up vegetarianism because it was troublesome during my journeys, and I again became a vegetarian. In reply to a letter written on my way back home, he wrote on 12th January 1933:

"I had your love letter from your ship. I was glad that you were at the Ashram and were able to take actual part in the service of the Harijans, and in my opinion, inasmuch as you rendered this selfless service to down-trodden humanity, you served the whole of it."

You were quite right in giving up spinning 'ropes' as you were doing. If you could have learnt the art properly, I would certainly have advised you to continue to spin not cotton but wool, but perhaps you have no talent for such work. God has blessed you with many other gifts, and it is well with you so long as you use them for the service of mankind, including of course your dear mother.

Next time we meet, if we do, you are not going to be 'awed' by me, if you are to be a daughter to me. Do not hesitate to write to me whenever you feel like it."

He wrote another letter only two days later, i. e. on the 14th of January, which said:

"I must continue to dictate. You are entitled to call yourself an Indian, since you have felt like one from your childhood, but that is not a substitute for your German birth. The adoption should be an addition both to your name and to your strength; and what can be finer than that we should all add on the virtues of our own nations to those of others?"

Why was there a struggle to choose between Garudev [R. Tagore] and myself? We are no competitors. Garudev occupies a throne which belongs to him by sheer merit. I have none of the gifts that he has, and what is more, we dearly love each other, and as years roll on, our love becomes stronger, and we understand also each other better and better. I would have you, therefore, to say that you like us both equally for whatever gifts God has bestowed on us. No more, therefore, of chosen-making, if you would be a real daughter like Mira."

He wrote again on the 17th of February

"I hope you have been receiving all my letters. You should not think of coming here in the hope of getting a professorship or something of that kind so as to enable you to support your mother. You will only come when the way is perfectly clear for you. Surely it is possible for you to leave India even from where you are and to do many acts of service. You have plenty of years before you. Go through the necessary training, keep India your goal, and some day you will graduate here. Of course you are like Lakshmi to me or Mira. But you must also realise that it is a hard task to bear."

The next letter is dated the 2nd of March:

"You are sending me letters regularly. But you are telling me nothing except about myself. You must now begin to tell me something about your children and the many things that you teach them and how you teach them. You don't think that these things will not interest me. They will, because they might be of use for the Ashram children. You should tell me also, as a teacher, what

you would do to and for the Ashram children, if you had them under your charge."

And the next one the 17th of the same month:

"Why do you want to come here for three days or at the most for a fortnight? [during 5 weeks' summer vacations] If you have at all imbibed the central truth of the Gita, it will tell you that this kind of wish has to be subjugated and sublimated into pure action which for you consists in doing your duty there. You should hold on to your savings, and if you cannot restrain yourself from spending them somehow, you should send them here for the Haryan cause. I do hope you got all my previous letters as also the *Harjan* which is being posted to you every week."

A week later, on the 24th, he wrote a long letter, evidently in reply to one from me:

"Your letters continue to come with clock-work regularity. Of course you are not going to be upset if you are turned out as a Jewson. I shall be now eagerly waiting for your letters to know your fate.

If you will have it so, you can take the pains for economy, though you must remember the old proverb that 'one swallow does not make a summer.' And for that reason, your summary dismissal of the question of food does not mean that the solution is as easy as you fancy it is for you [giving up meat-eating]. Whilst it need not be given undue importance, it is a gross error to think that food has nothing to do with a person's moral or even physical growth. The experience of the ages of the world shows that they have given importance—some more and some less—to it, and the majority have admitted that a bloodless diet is necessary for full spiritual enlightenment.

You need not worry over the poor comprehension that your girls have shown of shreni. I do not wonder. There is no response to shreni from the atmosphere. They have never been taught to attach the slightest value to it, and probably they have been taught to despise it. You cannot expect them all of a sudden to understand the value of shreni in an atmosphere so hostile as yours.

Mahadev has been receiving your letters, and he has got your booklet too. As I had heard of *Powerful*, and as it was quite a booklet, I read it during odd moments in two days, and I liked it very much."

His next letter is dated the 16th of March.

"I receive your letters regularly, and I have now your notes from your pupils' papers [essays on Gandhi]. They make very interesting reading. What worries me is the time you have spent over the translation and copying. I hope you have had my letters

that I have been sending you not quite every week but fairly regularly. I hope you are now satisfied that the work you may be doing there is also my work inasmuch as you are observing the rules of the Ashram and doing your work purely from a spirit of service, and I have no doubt that so long as your mother lives, your duty is to be by her side."

Again he wrote on the 13th of April.

"Your letter of 10th March is disturbing. Everything done in a hurry generally proves unsatisfactory, when it is not positively harmful. All haste must be deprecated. From the highest standpoint—and that is the only one I am sure which you want to apply to yourself—your coming will be justified only when you are ready for the Ashram life. That clearly you are not. Your immediate duty is to be by your mother's side. You cannot risk bringing her to India. If you are thrown out of employment and have to be in search of one, you have to courageously stand by your people and suffer the hardships that they will have to suffer, and if you have exhibited the fundamentals of the Ashram life, you might even render inestimable help to them. All your letters to 24 people in India, therefore, to get a job should not have been written. You do not want a job in India, but you want to give your free service, the whole of yourself, to India. I wish, therefore, you would give up the idea of the job, remain there by your mother's side and live the Ashram life there, so that if God wills it, He will send you some day to the Ashram."

This letter was redirected to me to the boat for India. On April 1st, 1933, I was dismissed from the Government College in Berlin for being a Jewess. As the Jews were deprived of their passports, I left for Venice on April 2nd and waited there for twelve days for the next boat to India. From Venice I wrote to Bapu that I was coming, and after landing in Bombay I went straight to Yeravda jail, and stayed in Poona for some time, seeing him almost daily in the prison. In May he began a fast for 21 days. I had evidently not understood the science of satyagraha well, for I started a fast in order to make him give up his, but he was adamant, and I gave up my fast after two days. On the same day (10th May) I got the following little note from him:

"I am glad you have broken your fast. You were too foolish to persist in your folly. Now be good. You are forgiven. You should come and see me when you feel like it. Love."

He then sent me to the Ashram at Sabarmati, and gave me my Indian name—Anjali. At Sabarmati I got

the following letter from him dated June 6th, 1933:

"You are with me when you are at the Ashram doing the Ashram work. I am sure you understand this very simple truth. There were many prisoners occupying the same yard. Do you suppose that they were living with me?"

After his release from prison in August 1933, he went from Poona to Wardha in the last week of September, and I had the good fortune to stay with him there till he started on the Harigan tour on 7th November. His next letter is dated 28th February, 1934, written from somewhere in South India.

"If you don't believe in God as a permanent, living and the only reality pervading all, naturally you cannot feel Him while praying or in the earthquake. The belief comes to a certain extent through reason and finally through faith. As children we derive belief from parents, as grown-ups from reason, and then we have faith or become sceptics. You will grow to faith in time, because I believe you to be a seeker, and because you have faith in one who believes in God."

The next one was dated the 15th of March.

"It is just now 12-45 a.m. The alarm that should have gone off at 2-15 a.m. went off at 12 midnight. I am attending to arrears at an affected place in Bihar.

That many Hindus are callous to the sufferings of animals is but too true. It is a mark of degradation and wickedness of the religious spirit. You don't need to be a Hindu but a true Jewess. If Judaism does not satisfy you, no other faith will give you satisfaction for any length of time. I would advise you to remain a Jewess and appropriate the good of other faiths."

And yet the next one is dated the 22nd of May, 1934, written while he was on a walking tour in Orissa:

"My condolence on the loss of your companion, the squirrel. You are right in thinking that those round you don't set up to the principle they profess. They do not realize that mere refraining from killing is not enough. It is necessary to show active sympathy for sufferers."

You should not be anxious about me. The march will do me good. I am certainly keeping well."

Baroda,  
22-3-1948.

## FOUR ANECDOTES

Jack C. Winslow

**M**Y first contact with Bapu was when he was convalescing at Jabu from his appendicitis operation. I had gone there to see Charlie Andrews, who was looking after him, and it was Charlie who introduced me to him. It was no time for a long conversation, but his loving welcome to a complete stranger was wonderful.

One characteristic incident of that visit remains with me. Charlie and I had left Bapu lying on the verandah, and Charlie was telling me about an article he had just written for the *Manchester Guardian* about the satyagraha movement then in progress in Travancore. In glowing terms he had described how all eyes were now concentrated on this wonderful movement and no one was interested any longer in the proposed Government reforms. "I'll just go and show it to Bapu," said Charlie, "before I send it off." Presently he returned, thoroughly crest-fallen. "What did Bapu think of it?" I asked. "Oh," said Charlie, "Bapu said 'Charlie, it's what you'd like to be true, but it isn't true.'" With all Bapu's idealism went a strong strain of realism, which Charlie Andrews sometimes lacked.

During the fast which Bapu undertook for the alteration of the 'Communal Award' for the Harijans, I went to see him in the prison at Yeravda. He was lying on a cot in the open court under a tree; and, as I approached, I struck my head on an overhanging bough.

A few days later, I went again to see him, and, as I approached, Bapu lifted a warning hand and said: "Mind the branch!" With visitors coming all day, it was amazing that he could remember so trivial a matter concerning one unimportant person!

When landing from the steamer on his way to London for the Round Table Conference, he was approached by a newspaperman desiring an interview. The latter, in the course of conversation, commented playfully on the scantiness of his attire in view of the rigours of the English climate. "It seems to me," replied the Mahatma with a smile, "that your plus fours are quite as amusing as my minus fours."



While at Oxford, Bapu was invited by the Master of Balliol to speak to a number of Oxford dons at his college. At the end of his address an opportunity for questions was given. A young don, slightly swollen-headed through having recently been made a Fellow of All Souls, commented a little scornfully that he could not understand how Mr. Gandhi could possibly reconcile two particular statements which he had made. Bapu smiled at him and replied in the politest manner, "If you cannot understand, I will take you step by step,"—a remark which the entire company greeted with delighted laughter.

Lynton,  
26-8-1948.

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